

# **Diversion to Iceland, 1941-42**

The camp at Budareyri, at the end of Reydarfjordur, 1941.

By R.E.G. Davies  
(E Company, 2nd Battalion, Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment) .

## **Introduction**

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This is a preliminary draft of a small booklet, planned for production toward the end of 2006, some 64 years after the events recorded in a diary kept by the author during his duties as a British soldier during the Second World War.

The original mission was part of the Allied wartime strategy to occupy Iceland, so as to prevent the Germans taking over the island as a base for its fleets of U-boats and even the famous *Bismarck* battleship.

As this possible danger was averted. The soldiers were then trained in Arctic warfare and mountaineering by Norwegian troops who were also stationed nearby.

All this took place at Budareyri, at the end of Reydarfjordur, on Iceland's eastern coast. At that time, all Icelandic roads, except those near the capital, Reykjavik, were simply unsurfaced dirt. Only for a few weeks in the summer was it possible to drive any vehicle across the lava desert to reach Akureyri, Iceland's second city. All communication with the rest of Iceland, except nearby fishing communities, was by sea.

The experience was a most unusual one for soldiers of the British Army, and, even after 64 years, the memories are still vivid.

*Tuesday 14th October, 1941.*

#### **The Great Day**

Left Hastings by truck to Eastbourne, there picking up rest of E company plus G Company, for departure by rail. Destination unknown. Route: Redhill, Guildford, Reading, Banbury, Rugby, Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh.

*Wednesday 15th Oct.*

Glasgow, Greenock. Here embarked first on a tender, then on to a 11,000ton Norwegian vessel, the *Bergensfjord*, a former 700-1,000-passenger Norwegian ocean liner, now a troopship.

*Thursday 16th Oct.*

Awoke after wonderful kip<sup>1</sup> in hammock. Agree with sailors in that it is the best kip in the world. Deck horribly crowded. Reminds you of crowded slave ships! Sleep, eat; and live in the same place. Approximately twice as crowded as our army mess-hall. Food previous day was marvelous, apart from inconvenience of not knowing where everything was. Bread in small wholemeal loaves, real butter; marmalade; and above all, plenty of everything. Ship remarkably clean on the whole. Worst part of it was the fact (from an army private's point of view) that the officers were treated as even more superior gods than they usually are. Turkey for a Thursday dinner!

#### *Friday 17th Oct.*

Awoke in hammock to find myself conscious of an imperceptible rolling, which suggested movement. Found to be true as boat has sailed at 04.00 hrs. Ate breakfast only to violently eject it again shortly afterwards. Tubby Harris unaffected and so he promptly got a good job as W.O.'s (Warrant Officers') waiter. The Atlantic is the place to take a beginners course in seasickness. Recovered enough to eat tea, but fought shy of any liquids. Even this fear, however, dispensed with by the end of the morning. Land to starboard (ahem). Probably Hebrides. Bags of kip after wicked natter<sup>2</sup>.

Now beginning to feel sea legs. First experience of horizon in every direction being dead level. Now revealed that our destination is **Iceland**. Much talk-speculation as to nature of that country, or of the nature of Tubby Martin, last seen reveille, Thursday. Fags (cigarettes) at 30 per 1/1 In canteen. Queue half way round ship.

#### *Saturday 18th*

Woke up as usual and – ambling into the open air – now notice varying degrees of cold as you ascend decks – surprised to see land, which must be Iceland. Have never seen such a rugged spectacle. Nothing but black hard, deathly-looking rock. As we approach, can see horrible breakers on a beach (such as it is) and in the far distance, more mountains. Pick out various small things on the land, such as slight signs of habitation. Went below to sort out kit, and half an hour afterwards back on deck again – pleasantly astonished to see land only a mile or so off. The grandest spectacle I have ever seen – the mountain on the left of the harbour at **Reykjavik**. Sheer rock, with a pronounced snowline, and clouds round the top. Reykjavik itself is quite a sizeable town. Can see two wireless stations, a church (cathedral?). Many ships in the harbour. Greenery in vicinity of town, in the lowlands, but elsewhere, only colours are brown, black, and white. Decision not to disembark at night. Saw second grand spectacle – Reykjavik lit up by night. Nothing like Southend or Blackpool, but after 2 ½ years of blackout restrictions, a sight for sore eyes. Food still absolutely marvelous. All of us, including Tubby Martin, fully recovered.

#### *Sunday 19th*

Reneille 05:30, usual routine until told to get dressed ready for going ashore. Down the chute (in place of gangway) into small sized boat, a trawler affair, which took us into Reykjavik harbour. Straight off the boat on to trucks and transported to transit camp about a mile out of town. Along concrete road to group of Nissen huts, 22 men per hut. Comparatively warm in huts. Canteen mess hall found to be quite good. Weather like sharp December day in England. Very clean but in afternoon, rain approaches and is soon mingled with snow. Lovely feeling, not having to worry about the blackout.

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<sup>1</sup> Kip: army word for sleep.

<sup>2</sup> Natter: army word for heated conversation.

### *Monday 20th*

Normal routine, though everything a bit late owing to late sunrise. Several Inspections during the morning, ending up with G .D.C. Iceland. Marched down to dock at Reykjavik. (Roy Kimber and I shared carrying my HMV portable gramophone and a case of about 50 records – 78-speed, long before long-playing LPs). Boarded another troopship, the *Leinster*. More modern than the *Bergensfjord*, but the food was much worse – British catering does not compare with Norwegian. Officers' quarters superior to the mens' – as usual.

### *Tuesday 21st*

Moved off in the morning. Boat rolling a lot. Eventually rounded a headland and came round to the South of the Island. Same scenery as before, an endless Succession of foreboding mountains. Borrowed small guide to . Iceland and found a bit more about this unusual country. Our destination, Reydarfjordur, is a small fjord on the far eastern coast, about 100 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Nearest town apparently is Seydisfjordur. Wrote letter home.

### *Wednesday 22nd October*

Still going along coast of Iceland, which now appears more rugged than ever. Mountains much higher, cloud covered, and more lifeless-looking . and barren. At dinner time turn up a fjord, which must be Reydarfjordur, our eventual destination. We go up the placid waters of the fjord (fjordur in Icelandic) and drop anchor at its end, about 12 miles from the open sea. Water here calm as a milJ pond. Not a ripple. Go by tender to wooden jetty of Budareyri . Trucks take us about ¼ mile along a dirt road to collection of Nissen huts which is to be our abode for the coming winter. Huts quite comfortable-depending on initiative of individualists. Gramophone and card games soon going. Have to get water the previous night for the morning wash. See the Aurora Borealis for the first time. Budareyri is a small hamlet situated on a small stretch of greenery .at the end of the fjordur. There is a co-op, with a restaurant above (1938), a Nissen hut Y.M.C.A., and a Nissen N A.A.F.I, both the latter quite as nomal as English canteens. Community apparently depends for its livelihood upon the slaughter houses at the end of the jetty. From heresay, 1,000 sheep are slaughtered daily mostly for export. There is electric power in Budareyri, source unknown, though from the environment, should imagine it to be water power<sup>3</sup>.

### *Tuesday 23rd*

Spent time making odd things like beds, tables, and so forth. Conditions better than expected. Nissen huts very warm. Sleeping bags issued, and with them, can do entirely without blankets. Gramophone going like hell. Wonder if it is to much of a good thing so that by winter, the value of it win be lost. Good grub at canteen.

### *Friday 24th*

Carried on with various jobs – painting and so forth<sup>4</sup>. Rest of blokes on parade, as per Aldershot. Weather quite warm though freezing hard at night. Paid 60 kronur-2 weeks pay.

### *Saturday 25th*

Football on a pitch not much worse than on a dried-out Wormwood Scrubs (or on Castle Hill, Shaftesbury, my home town) but without grass. Find out various odd bits of infonnation about Iceland. Local R.E.s (Royal Engineers) are West Countrymen. Food quite good, but mutton

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<sup>3</sup> Later ascertained to be correct.

<sup>4</sup> Months earlier, had been able to make use of drawing and painting skills to make signs, paint badges on tin helmets. Or on trucks. This special ability was greatly beneficial. As I was excused all kinds of duties, such as route marches or parades.

understandably predominant but there is a shortage of bread and sugar. Strange to be able to buy stuff in the village without coupons.

#### *Sunday 26th*

Told to clean truck up-co-driver with Joe Tarbuck of a horrible Morris Commercial. Went fishing and caught 22 mackerel in about an hour. (From the jetty in Budareyri, the water is perfectly clear, with hundreds of fish. You just have to drop a line with an improvised hook.) Then spent an hour towing Tubby Martin out of the drink where he had taken his truck for washing. Painting guard-room notice board in afternoon. ENSA show (Entertainment for the troops) in evening. Blanched up. (As in England, an the equipment had to be blanched regularly with the khaki-coloured powder, from a block with water.)

#### *Monday 27th*

More painting-Guard Room sign, complete with cap-badge. A terrific wind sprang up overnight and kept blowing an day. The transport garage and stores were lifted clear away and tom to pieces. George Wynn (who had already strained his side while lying inside on a sheet of galvanized iron), Cpt. Clifford, and Mo Morris, who were standing on the sheet of iron, were all lifted up on it, magic carpet-fashion. Mo jumped off, but Clifford's collar bone was broken. Blokes who were manning positions on top of the nearby hill were blown all over the place. Laundry by platoon-much fun and games. Surprised to find my own quite successful.

#### *Tuesday 28th*

Finished off the guard room notice board. Spent morning cadging wood off the R.E.s. In afternoon told to make wardrobe and shelf for Major Wray, who has half a Nissen hut to himself: carpet on floor, washstand, dressing table, and iron bedstead. Fishing in evening and visit to George in dock (local hospital) which is close handy to our billets. Atmosphere of his ward less hospital-like than I have ever seen. Played Tombola-Ken Mortimes is lucky.

#### *Wednesday 29th*

Wardrobe job still in mind but not in hand. Painting odd notices and so forth. Played football for 2nd XI v. Officers and Sergeants, whom we beat, 7:1. More tombola at RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps) joint.

#### *Thursday 30th*

Still painting. More tombola  
Excuse writing, because of hard night in hut.

#### *Friday 31st*

On guard! Me! Pay Parade 25 kronur, worth just under one English pound. Organized tombola in canteen. Not present as outside with bayonet. Bought 6 eggs off an Icelander at 60 aurar each (6d). Northern lights (Aurora Borealis) amazing.

#### *Saturday 1st Nov*

Can now see the sun for only half an hour or so at roughly midday when it appears above a saddle between two the mountains. Rest of the time it is hidden by the mountains which surround us across the fjordur on the south side. All the hills are brilliantly sunlit, but our encampment is in shadow. Played in 2nd XI v the Rest, as a practice for former team. Won 8:0. Visited R.E.s – Cornishmen, had stodge-up of liver, tea, and the eggs from last night's purchase. Clocks put back an hour.

### *Sunday 2nd November*

Late reveille plus hour extra through clocks. Lovely half hour in dozy state gloating over the extra kip just before getting up. Played football for 2nd XI v KOYLI (King's Own light Infantry) M.T.S. (Motor Transport Section). Lost 5.3. Good game. Best-team won, though we scored an extra goal and they handled one in. 1st Team had previously beaten KOYLI H.Q. Coy 5:3 .

Went mountaineering in the afternoon with Ken Mortimer, Roy Kimber, and Mo Morris, up the nearest mountain to the binet, about 2,000 feet high with summit a sugar-loaf with cliffs all round. Slopes consist of lava streams, strewn with rocks shoulders of an sizes. Lower slopes moss covered, stunted grass, and dwarf trees. Snow higher up, frozen hard. As it got dark at 5 o'clock. We could not risk making final ascent. Talking to two KOYLI climbers, discovered that only one soldier had ever reached . the top, and that, he was an experienced climber. Arriving at the bottom, . Sam Briggs tells of an expedition to the opposite side of the fjordur, which, owing to the complete absence of sunlight, was covered with ice-flows. Good stodge up. Cinema in village at Y.M.C.A. but did not go. Made . Improvements to locker.

### *Monday 3rd November*

Painting – excused from route march. General scrounge.

### *Tuesday 4th*

Ditto. Bath Parade. Missed morning exercise, also wearing respirator. Laundry in afternoon, but somehow never managed to get my quota of shirts done. Therefore, wangled billet orderly next day, so as to do them in Army's time. Bit of drawing – Muggsy Spanier, my favourite jazz trumpeter, on some of the records that I had brought.

### *Wednesday 5th*

What a Guy Fawkes Day! Snow outside, but blazing fire inside so why worry? Drill parade in afternoon. This time no escape. George Wynn, just out of dock, flops down. N.C.O.'s nattered on subject of discipline (ha-ha). Yet another new system in mess-hall. It is getting old, and I don't mean maybe. Snow falling and wind blowing a bit.

### *Thursday 6th*

#### Blizzard

Reveille announced by various people (Joe Mullen, Sam Fuller) each telling horrible stories of a horrible night on guard. Apparently a blizzard has been blowing all night. From one end of the room comes the voice of Sam Briggs who claims he is snowed up. Careful examination reveals that this is not much of an exaggeration and it takes Sam all morning to dry his kit out, and the platoon a couple of hours to clean the place up. The snow has apparently worked its way through the ventilators (put in army fashion upside down) but this is not half as bad a state of affairs as in another billet where the door was left open all night, allowing a large drift to form itself around Nick Carter. Most of the morning spent in building a new home for the electricity generator. Working conditions terrible as a blizzard is blowing on a mild scale, and the loose soil is whipped up with it. Patched up billet in afternoon. Roy Kimber and Topper Brown building a shit-house for sergeants. Rum issue with great ceremony at supper time. Everybody there, with Major Wray dishing out the old chest-warmer. Wind dropped a bit in evening and so was able to get to cafe in village for liver and chips. Peculiar business after tea when getting water. The water cart having jaggged in (broken down), Sam and I set out with cans to the stream, which was hidden under snowdrifts, and so the water had to be dug out. All this in a blizzard, up to your knees in snow. Where's my bed.

### *Friday 7th November*

Pay Parade – 30 kronur. Housey-housey (tombola) in canteen, without success. Finished off Sergeants Mess notice, but C.S.M. decided it was not good enough and so put in on the shit-house. Cheek! Got first letter off to home. No mail myself.

### *Saturday 8th*

Very cold in morning – even anti-freeze in trucks is frozen. Drew driving gloves from Q.M. without usual wicked flatter. No sun at all today. On first fatigue, scrubbing out mess hall. Cinema show in evening, Gordon Harker in Saloon Bar. Followed by usual stodge-up – second helping consisted of 2 eggs each. Raining late in evening. Either a thaw or a freeze up – wait and see.

### *Sunday 9th*

Duty driver. Just my luck to be a horribly wet day. Rained all day, with a wind springing up later on. Took a Bedford, after long preparation – putting in batteries, filling with water, uncovering – and had to go to R.A.S.C. (Royal Army Service Corps) dump for paraffin. Got bogged in and when digging out, discovered that the ground was frozen to a depth of about 6 inches. Took electricity generator to L.A.D. in afternoon. Snow is now beginning to melt, with constant attack by rain. Just emptied truck before tea when told to go out again to L.A.D. In the end took the Morris 8 out. Never driven it before, and conditions indescribable. Probably the worst driving conditions in the world are on our Icelandic roads in Icelandic weather. On the way, nattered with Mr. Trefgarne on the subject of Joe Marsala! All the subalterns are apparently interested in swing music and look upon me as a reference book. Cafe in afternoon with Roy. Therefore early kip, especially as clothes wet through.

### *Monday 10th of November*

#### **Rain, Rain, Rain**

Wake up listening to the storm raging outside. Rain beating on hut from all sides, causing several leaks. Painting in morning – canteen notice. Roy duty driver so take two trips down to cafe with him. 8 o'clock completes 48 hours continuous rain, none of which has been of the steady downpour time, but at the time being blown everywhere in a strong gale. In the evening, a party set out in waders to divert the local stream from the officers mess. Normally a trickling hillside stream, it has now become a raging torrent. Where it should have turned just before revealing the camp, it burst its banks and now threatens the camp. Sandbags temporarily stops the flow. Sam Briggs falls in and loses his tin hat.

### *Tuesday 11th November*

This is Armistice Day but no-one keeps the 2 minutes silence here. Still raining. Between each Nissen hut, there are little streams charging their way seawards. In fact, our encampment is now situated in a delta, with each hut on a sort of island. Over the other side of the fjordur can be seen scores of recently-formed mountain torrents which stream down the sheer mountainside. Wind has dropped slightly but rain shows no sign of ceasing. Finished off canteen notice. Missed a lecture on Russia, by going out in the pouring rain to cafe.

### *Wednesday 12th*

Wake up hearing sentry (Tubby Martin) announcing that rain ceased at 1 o'clock in morning. End of 77 hours continuous downpour. During day, intermittent rain. Now back to duty, did 1st parade with machine guns, but then on Dan Hardy's sanitary truck. This operation consisted of piling up the latrine buckets on the back of the truck, backing into the shallows of the fjordur, and simply ejecting the contents of the buckets in to the fjordur. Quite an

experience driving through shallow rivers. Then carried about 4 tons of ammunition back to the camp. Went out with Bert Hendry and Arthur Dyett to the fish shop.

*Thursday 13th November*

### **18-mile Rough-Country Trek**

Big stunt in which we acted as infantry. Marched 18 miles in all over some of the roughest country in the world. First along a road (like all roads here, merely dirt, not paved) but most of the road washed away, in fact almost a mile of it has become a watercourse. The road was worse than the worst country lane in England, but this wasn't so bad compared to 2 hours continuous advancing over rough country, alternately marsh, heath, and rocks. At first we were negotiating streams, every few yards or so, with great care, but soon we just waded through, finding that this was no worse in the long run. Hot meal on the way back, but arrived in the camp feeling dead tired, and thinking of next morning's company orders, having been nicked for talking on parade-crafty sneakup from behind the C.S.M. Cinema show in the evening- Joe E. Brown in *The Gladiator*. Intermittent slight rain all day and climate, as of late, muggy.

*Friday 14th*

Officers' Mess fatigue and usual Kr30 on pay parade. C.S.M. has not pressed change of previous day. Letter from home (1st).

*Saturday 15th November*

A bit more post drifts in. On parade all morning-very pleasant as we did nothing but argue and 'discuss'. Free afternoon-recreational training off on account of rain. Tombola in the evening, but spent the time in Ken's hut with gramophone, etc. When canteen opened at 6, it was announced that they had Bryl Cream in stock. They call the Air Force "The B.C. Boys", but you should see E Company! Chocolate is now rationed weekly-4 bars per week, including one bar of milk. No candles in either NAAFI or Y.M.C.A., so lighting during the evening is now a serious problem. Managed to get another lamp, but this is still not enough for the whole hut.

*Sunday 16th November*

Church parade in the morning. Usual bullsh\*t. About a dozen blokes nicked on petty charges. Played football in afternoon for 2nd XI v. 1st XI. Lost 3-0 – as usual, goalkeeper trouble. Tombola in evening, and came up 3 times. About 15 Kr. wins in our room alone. Later in evening, Jock Mailey knocks his head for the 50th time on one of the lamps and it occurs to him that it would be a good idea to start a fund-IO aurar per bash on loaf. Agreed. Fund further augmented by Joe Mallen's suggestions of 10 aurar for everyone who leaves the door open. I am treasurer, and the fund mounts up amazingly.

*Monday 17th November*

Duty Driver, but made no journey for various reasons. Bath Parade in the morning, and cleaning trucks in afternoon with Joe Tarbuck. Broke down on way back and towed in. (This may have been the occasion when, hitting one of the dozens of pot-holes in the dirt road, a front wheel came off and went spinning along ahead of us). Sketched Duke Ellington after ten, and went down to Y.M.C.A. for lecture on ToCH<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> ToCH: a semi religious organization. Rather like the Salvation Army. Which did great work during the war, like the Y.M.C.A., in providing snack bars, etc. for the troops.

### *Tuesday 18th November*

The mountains are beginning to look pure white with many light falls of snow at night. A definite snowline near the base. There is Youngers Beer in the canteen. Took over billet orderly and consequently had an easy day. A lecture in the evening about Divisional HQ Organization by Major Wray. Later on, grand piss-up on account of Captain Proctor's leaving. General community and solo (!) singing. All officers and sergeants pissed, including Aggie Hall who called C.S.M. a few fruity names and got whacked in the nick. Tried to hit C.S.M. but hit Sergeant Hill instead. High jinks in our billet at lights out. Jock Mailey, lance-corporal on the recently fanned Regimental Police, came in well cut, trying to get Roy Kimber (extra fatigues) on sweeping out canteen; picks fight with Ernie Brooks, a general sort out issues before he is finally put to bed. Has apparently been harbouring a remark made in jest by Brooks days before, and took it as personal insult. Sequel-black eye for Jock.

### *Wednesday 19th November*

On truck with Joe Tarbuck-two visits to cafe during day. Mail boat comes in with troops back from leave. These are the chaps who went on leave on the boat which brought us, five weeks ago. Assembled for broadcast of G.O.c. which fen through. Drew Veronica Lake for Joe Manen in evening. George Wynn and Ken drop in. Sam Briggs does an Egyptian dance for our entertainment –one of the funniest sights this side of Bertram Mills Circus! Find I am on spud peeling in the morning – query, will I go on the route march to Eskifjordur?

### *Thursday 20th November*

Route march cancelled because of heavy rain, which came down hard at 4 o'clock onwards. On potato peeling, and finished after breakfast. We hear of yet two more silly restrictions-spud peelers now have to take their spuds out in the open, and we are no longer allowed to hang washing up on lines in our billets. There is a big shake because the 2nd IIC is coming round. Though officially a "free day," all 5 Platoon are on fatigues of some sort. Ken Mortiner gets news of leaving Monday for Reykjavik on a water course.

### **Hike to the Waterfall**

Get off spud-peeling in the afternoon to go on a hike with Sam Briggs to the waterfall across the fjordur. Go in rubber boots but when we get to the largest river near the other side, we get our feet wet. A bit of hill and rock climbing before we get to the fall. The farmstead below the fall harnesses its own waterpower from the torrent by means of a flume and a small generator<sup>6</sup>. Surprising considering the environment. After drying out and tea, help Dizzy Dyett and other education instructors with preparing lecture on North Africa. Two boats in.

### *Monday 24th November*

Billet orderly. Bath parade at Minden Camp. English lessons by Corporal Howells-vocabulary practice.

### *Tuesday 25th November*

#### All-day Training Scheme

All day scheme, again a continuation of the last one on 13 November. Lucky to have a dry day for it-2 out oD days here are wet, and a dry night is usual. Turned up the valley and marched, as infantry, for about 4 miles, where we paused, preparatory is making the advance proper. Going over rough country-rock-strewn, bracken, cranberries, low, scrubby trees, and

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<sup>6</sup> On the way we saw a wonderful sight-Even before the sky itself was filled with evening tints. The snow on top off the mountains was trans-former! Into a panorama of reds. Pinks. And oranges, because of reflection from clouds which we ourselves could not see. Even the black part of some of the mountains turned a deep red.



coarse grass the only vegetation; every few yards or so a deep gully cut out by one of the many torrents which pour down the mountainside; - mile upon mile of it, we advanced to an objective which was another mile and a half away up the mountainside. At the beginning of the advance, we took a mountain torrent in our path. It was about 30 yards wide with many rocks forming rough stepping stones on which you could gain a foothold if you were lucky. Few were lucky. Thus most of the scheme was carried out with wet feet<sup>7</sup>. After advancing in alternate sections "leap-frog" fashion, we fired off a few rounds, rifles, tommy guns, and anti-tank, and finished up with a bayonet charge. Returned to find the Q.M. with the grub just the other side of the river, and so not much time was wasted in the return crossing. Marched back to camp and arrived back by moonlight. No education but a talk on the stunt. Saw Ken down the cafe-just off to Reykjavik on a hygiene course, lucky beggar.

### *Wednesday 26th November*

Woke up with water dripping over the bed – a common complaint in our hut. Something being done about it this morning. Holes found in roof to be stopped up. Duty driver – sanitary truck and earth-loading in the morning, and wood scrounging from the Royal Engineers in the afternoon. Went up to C.H.Q. in the evening to draw a portrait of George Wynn's wife, Honor. Mention of George reminds me that on the previous day, he was shoved on the scheme in spite of only just out of hospital from his previous accident. This time, he fell down exhausted and was carried part of the way on a stretcher.

### *Thursday 27th November*

#### **Marathon Training March**

Route march-The worst ordeal, physically, that I have ever experienced. We started off straight up the mountainside over the usual rough Icelandic countryside, and marched about 3 miles to the first halt where we had cocoa. This was carried, from the start, in large packs, each containing two containers. By men who had 110 other equipment. As for me, my job was to carry the Vickers machine gun tripod, weighing 26 lb., in addition to the full pack load. We made our way at a pretty good pace up the mountain pass (we called it "Happy Valley") which ends up just above our camp. We reached the watershed well within the snowline at about 11 :30. This was at an elevation of about 2,000 feet and at this height we were able to see the sun, for the first time in several weeks. We had advanced in organized sections, but now the first few stragglers were beginning to drop out with fatigue. The pass here was extremely rugged, undulating steeply into gullies every few yards or so. Another two halts and we were now approaching the end of the valley, about 12 miles from camp, with everyone pretty well exhausted and generally fed up.

The plan was that, not too far further on, we were to pick up trucks on the Seydisfjordur road at 12:30, with a hot meal from the Q.M. It then became painfully obvious that something had gone astray for not a truck was in sight, though telephone wires indicated that the road was not far off. The "field" was now strung out in irregular intervals extending for about two miles back. Peachey was absolutely out on his feet, and was half-carried by the C.S.M., Ernie Brooks, Charlie Ebers, and Nobby Clarke. The last two exhausted themselves over this operation. We set off again and found that, as is usual on our schemes nowadays, we had to cross a stream, or rather, in this case, a minor mountain torrent. Having learnt by experience, we just ploughed through it knee-deep to waist-deep, and was that water cold! It was only a degree or so above freezing. (Incidentally, possibly because I was one of the few in our regiment from the country, rather than from London, I was fitter than most, and was the first to arrive at and cross the river.)

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<sup>7</sup> A marvelous sight-a miniature grand canyon. About 100 ft deep, sheer, with a waterfall pouring over and a cleft in one end to a pool right at the bottom.

One of us, Ellison (known to his mates as Eli), staggers half-way through, trips over a submerged rock, and is carried down the river. Thoroughly wet through, we dragged him out, shivering violently, and tried to keep him warm. As luck would have it, he managed to get a lift on a civilian truck (of about 1923 vintage) which, almost heaven-sent, happened to be passing. (On this road, the traffic is about two or three trucks per day). The driver took his scarf off and wrapped it very tightly around Eli's neck saying "that will keep you all right" – and he was. The rest of us sat on the roadside, still no trucks in sight. The first 30 or so of us then began to march in the Budareyri direction, but we had only gone about a mile when we were called back as the trucks had been located by the dispatch rider in the opposite direction, near Eskifjordur. They still did not appear and so we started off along the road again, and marched about seven miles before they caught us up. What a welcome sight that first truck was, engine roaring, headlights blazing (it was now quite dark)! We crowded on to the trucks and with most of our troubles over, landed up at camp after transferring to some larger Royal Artillery trucks which had been commandeered by Major Wray who had previously forged ahead of the column and partly walked, partly hitchhiked, back to the nearest unit. Bags of grub, the fist since breakfast, rum ration and bags of tea, followed by kip. Eli was fine, after about six mugs of tea.

Blokes which stand out in my mind are Barratt, our company clerk, who carried a large pack plus containers for about 21 miles in all; Frankie Pullen, not very strong, but stuck it doggedly through sheer will power; Eli; Ben Brooks, who in addition to carrying Peachey, carried cocoa; Lieutenant Pinks, carrying anything up to three rifles, dashing around rounding up his platoon, the only one to do so; the Q.M., getting C.H.Q. men off the trucks so that the men could ride; the Royal Fusiliers driver, who to me meant a covered truck and a comfortable (comparatively) ride. It's all over now but a wealth of memories remain. (see map) Reading over the account of the route march, I find I have not emphasized the cold temperature enough. It got colder as we got higher, and by the time we arrived at the snow-line, my canvas trousers were solid cylinders of ice at the bottom. Then after the river, we were in the state where it was too cold to stand still, and were too tired to keep moving continuously, Those trucks!

#### *Friday 28th November*

Free day with reveille at 7 o' clock, owing to the exertions of the previous day. Pay parade. Geese brought in for Christmas. Made a new locker, with sliding doors, an improvement on the last one. Cafe in the evening.

#### *Saturday 29th November*

On transport parade-B Group Parade alternately with A Group. Sanitary truck, followed by rubble journeys for Sgt Hill, who is making a new floor for the ration store. Tombola in the evening.

#### *Sunday 30th November*

Pause for two contrasting reflections on the regimental routine: (a) Blake, just off detention, made up to L/Cpl on the Police; (b) though not really cold yet, issued with 3 blankets, with which we have to make up a complicated inspection kit. Until I joined up, I never thought there were so many ways of folding an ordinary square blanket. Spot of painting in the morning, followed by some barracking at the football match. Our 1st XI lose 2-0 to a KOYLI team, but we won the barracking contest. Improved on the locker in the afternoon while the rest of the hut kipped-you rarely see an afternoon kip on this island. On guard in the evening. Wrote letter home.

*Monday 1st December*

Came off guard (very easy) to find myself marked down for the scheduled route march but this was cancelled because of rain and I did billet orderly. Big complaint by powers-that-be because our room was not swept early enough. No broom but that, apparently, is no excuse in the army. Education.

*Tuesday 2nd December*

Spud peeling, out in the open as usual. More education.

*Wednesday 3rd December*

On road-mending in morning – here, the roads always need mending. Basketball in the afternoon, followed by education, which is now 3:30 until 4:30. Went down to boxing in evening to find out whether my sight was too bad to take an active part. Soon found out. They put me against Smudger Smith, a good boxer, who came close to knocking me out. Afternoon debate-should women be conscripted. Very amusing, with Jack Butterworth the star comedian. In the evening blanched up and polished brasses. In Iceland!

*Thursday 4th December*

Driving; first sanitary, then stones for road mending. Wicked weather with one solitary flash of lightning in the morning. Sign over door “Wood End”. (In Memoriam)<sup>8</sup> Cafe in evening.

*Friday 5th December*

Manning Exercise. 4 Platoon were the ‘enemy’ and by some crafty 5th Column work, managed to take the locks and fuzes out of the gun. After struggling up the hill to the positions, therefore, all the elaborate fire-orders, and so forth were useless. Fortunately our tommy-gunners wiped out most of 4 Platoon, but nevertheless the moral superiority was theirs. After the series of false alarms which constituted most of the scheme, we then had a series of cancellations as to the layout of kit for kit inspections in the afternoon. This inspection almost on the lines of peacetime regular army, with everything as it ironed out. Best kits excused next kit inspection. No pay until Monday. Arts and Crafts in the evening-I now take a class in Drawing for Beginners. Most of the chaps being interested, the class is pretty easy to go through. The company laundry is now in full swing and a plan handed in this evening. Have spent most of the day defending myself from wicked accusations of “gimper”<sup>9</sup> from my mates, on the strength of boards in my kit (to “iron” them out).

*Saturday 6th of December*

Beginning to freeze up again-Fan of snow. Given a job painting notice for the officers’ Mess. Education in afternoon.

*Sunday 7th of December*

Drill parade in the morning-rather a farce as both officers and sergeants were still half-pissed from previous night. The whole company in a shambles with wrong orders and wisecracks being the chief words of command. Billet resembled a tomb in the afternoon. Everyone in kip Mill Hill style.<sup>10</sup> Managed to struggle to consciousness for tea, after which we heard news of Japan’s entry into war. Much talk.

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<sup>8</sup> 8 Refers to the most enjoyable billet near Hastings, a private house that had been voted as our best abode since joining up in 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Gimper: a gimper is one who gimps. i.e., one who is excessively concerned with keeping his brasses and boots highly polished, and his webbing equipment immaculate.

<sup>10</sup> Mill Hill: a district in northern London. Where we were stationed at one time.

### *Monday 8th of December*

Route march in the morning, but missed it, doing billet orderly for 3 billets. Big moan, because of our great platoon commander's (lieut. Pinks's) infantry pace. Boat in, containing precisely five letters and one parcel for the whole company. Pay parade in the afternoon. Education-English, now getting boring. Room fund stands at kr500. Messed about in evening trying to make new arrangement for bed. Wicked moan from Roy as expected.

### *Tuesday 9th*

Painting Officers' Mess notice all day, Finished in afternoon and given new commission-painting various replicas of collar dogs, badges, etc. For Officers Mess. Plenty of snow on the ground. In the evening, the boat having got in the afternoon, there was a huge sack of mail for each platoon. Also a rumour that a sack was dropped in the fjordan. But as this story originated from Blake, there is still some doubt. G.O.C. coming round, so as big shake is the order of the day. O.C.'s lecture in evening, and to the joy of our platoon, he criticized the fact that some men tried to march at an infantry pace. Prepared transport in the evening for stunt on the following day. Ted Tyler spilt petrol on a hurricane lamp and we had a nice little 8-gallon blaze which burnt nothing except some woodwork on the truck. Received a letter from home containing a letter from Dad; a thick rollneck pullover from Shaftesbury British Legion; and a demand notice from the Hastings library for a library book and 5d fine.

### *Wednesday 10th*

More snow, but the stunt is still on. "Transport set out under very bad snowy conditions, no chains on the wheels, and after about half a mile, gun kit was taken off and carried. A couple of hours later we managed to get the trucks through another two or three miles, but only after some difficulty-pulling trucks out of ditches, pushing them up hills, etc. Sinfield got halfway up a hill and slid backwards again; Joe Tarbuck slid sideways into the ditch; Harry Cardew went right through but was lucky to get back. The gun teams did well considering a bad start, but I don't know what the GOC said when he prepared himself for a rat-tat-tat, and only got a click. Gus Finch distinguished himself by complaining he was being fucked about, within a few yards of Major Wray. Everyone slipped up on the ice at some time or another. Joe and I managed to get a cup of tea in the cafe. Afternoon's gun cleaning. Cafe in evening. Came back to find Ted Feltham, who had had a few, giving a one-man concert of classic songs. Joe Mallen also under the weather, merry, and couldn't standup.

### *Thursday 11th*

On fatigues-Officers' Mess. Bath parade. Organized company snow-fight in the afternoon. (Started off in region of Arctic Fox Fann) Finished up by concerted attack upon Mr. Stanyer, Wilmot, Trefgame, Pinks, Major Wray, and various odd sergeants. Pulled Pinks through the snow by his legs, in fact, he looked more like a snowmen than most snowman. Could not entice the Gestapo (Regimental Police) or Corporal Falk (cook, so he thinks) out of the huts. CSM also conspicuous by his absence. Another mail boat in but I don't think there's anything for me on it. OC's lecture-subject chiefly looking. Also reference to Murmansk. Wrote letter home. Taken off transport today because, they say, I cannot paint and drive.

### *Friday 12th of Dccember*

Still looking for wood to paint the Kensington Collar Dog on. Snow is still falling spasmodically and is getting quite deep underfoot (Snow fell on the 6th and has been on the ground since). Had the opportunity to take out one of the Company's 17 pairs of skis and got some elementary practice on a slight slope by the camp. Pay parade in the afternoon, followed

by a debate on American Aid to Great Britain in connection with her present entry into the war. Did some shopping in the evening and lost a few kronur at tombola.

#### *Saturday 13th*

General scrounge on the strength of the painting job, which cannot be continued until undercoat of paint is dry. Letter in afternoon, a tombola in evening. Finished off bedside table.

#### *Sunday 14th*

Billet orderly. Snow which yesterday was thick on ground has now turned to slush because of heavy rain which started yesterday afternoon and is still coming down. No joke getting water or coal. The fire in the hut, (as usual when I'm supposed to be watching it), went out about dinnertime. Taking a bowl off the top of the stove so as to re-light it, I placed the aforesaid bowl on a chair which, I discovered 3/5 of a second too late, had only three legs. Result was a miniature flood which covered Joe Tarbuck's bed, who convinced me in no uncertain terms that I was the awkwardest bloke in the anny. Having got that off his chest; he postponed further heavy sarcasm until the end of the Sunday afternoon siesta. As last Sunday, the billet was in a semiconscious state until Ethel Newman came in to announce that Sam Briggs had beaten him in the final of the Buderayr table tennis competition. Did a spot of painting in the evening.

#### *Monday 15th December*

Still painting. Bath. Cafe. Letter off to home and to Jack Domoney (probably in Egypt)

#### *Tuesday 16th December*

Route march over the mountains to Eskifjordur Ridge. Climbed up the mountains to an altitude of about 1,000 feet and proceeded in the direction of Eski, keeping level and parallel with the road. Snow from previous week still lying everywhere, frozen for the most part, making it pretty hard going, especially where it had turned to thick ice. In places, threaded our way along a path which Major Wray had dug, and sometimes chaps had the misfortune to slip. Chapman just saved himself by clutching with his hands. George Wynn and Ted Drew also nearly 'got their lot! At one place, descending about 50 feet, after the first few chaps had walked down and shipped, it became more in the nature of a slide, similar to a helter skelter in an amusement park. We all slid down and took off at the bottom, landing with a bump, nearly breaking our necks, with everyone else laughing like hell. Eventually got to the road and after a hot meal, did a forced march back to camp. After tea, made a visit to the newly-opened cinema down by the second Jetty. Just a Nissen hut with a concrete floor, wooden seats, and old sheet for a screen, but the focus and sound surprisingly good. Only difficulty was the continuation-interval after every reel and also when the electricity supply failed. A mediocre film, *The Lady's from Kentucky* but it made a diversion.

#### *Wednesday 17th December*

Carried on painting replica of Kensington collar dog. Had just finished it after dinner when Sam Briggs, true to type, lays on it. Sam pretends he is a victim of circumstances but the fact remains, he did it. Another cinema show in the evening in YMCA but by ENSA-Mr. Wong, *Detective*, well backed up by the *Three Stooges*, making quite an enjoyable programme.

#### *Thursday 18th December*

Just on midnight, everyone woken up and told that an Alarm had been sounded. Not until Pinks came in a second time did we realize that it was no horrible dream, and realized that it was no horrible dream. We eventually shambled over to the gun stores, shambled up the hill

into position, whacked the guns in, whacked them out again, and shambled back to the gunstores. On exit from stores, was subjected to the Sam Fuller chat, and was told that I would “Be for orders for urinating against the ration stores.” Appeared on orders at about 11 o’clock next morning, and received 2-Day CK Shall. Therefore, for the next two days be answering bells, whistles, bugles, rattles, and other such appliances for calling jankers<sup>11</sup> to order. Am now repainting the Camp Sign, which is being changed from Ottawa Camp to Hyde Park. Did some cookhouse in the evening, but not much. Answered various calls during the evening, but at the 9:50 call, was still darning socks in my shirtsleeves. Never has a man been dressed in so short a space of time. Within half-a-minute, I was outside, having been assembled by Joe Mallen, Roy and various other members of the room who took directions from me as to where the kill was.

#### *Friday 19th*

Jankers in the morning is a snip. Getting up 15 minutes early is compensated for by the fact that you miss BRC (Breakfast Roll Call) on the strength of cleaning out the quardroom or something equally simple. Drew 30 kronur extra at pay parade. Helped in the cookhouse after, but missed education. Remainder of CB pretty easy chiefly getting canteen ready for tombola. The grand total of the “Lamp and Door Club” is 70,85 kronur, so I dished out the money for beer – 70 kronur buys 56 bottles.

#### *Saturday 20th December*

Short scheme lasting till dinnertime, but had to get the guns up to the nearest ridge at the end of the valley. Tricky going as ice and snow fonn most of the ground surface. Free afternoon except for gun cleaning. Cinema in the evening –The Saints Double Trouble. The Icelanders charge 1.25 kronur admission. 1.25 kronur a time.

#### *Sunday 21st December*

Gimped church parade-Carols etc formed most of the service. Also on Sergtants’ Mess fatigue but finished early in the afternoon. Billet again silent in sleep. Geese, now pretty wen fattened up, unceremoniously lose their heads in the afternoon. Did a bit of studying. All 8 O’clock went in for a piece of cake. Come out at 10 having several Fremlins, and lost on roulette. Longly delayed . Leinster” clue in tomorrow.

#### *Monday 22nd*

Morning Exercise. Lugged all our gun-kit up to our positions, together with 26,000 or our 53,000 rounds. Would sooner have done an all day route march. On top of all this we had to lug them all down again. English in the afternoon and cinema “Marshal of Mesa City” in the evening. A terrific bundle of mail has come in. Several letters and cards, and two parcels. One from Auntie Ethel containing eatables, and one from Dad containing drawIng material, part of which is 21/6s worth of artists brushes.

#### *Tuesday 23rd*

Preparation for Xmas. Scrubbing out in morning, rudely interrupted by a nab—fatigue digging a trench for projected water supply. Earth is frozen to a depth of 6 inches. Debate in afternoon on value of propoganda. Wrote home. Finished off painting called “Sweating” about Tombola, instead of going to ENSA pictures “Garrison Follies”

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<sup>11</sup> Jankers: the army term for “confined to barracks,” or “C.B” which could mean all Jdnds of punishments apart from actually being confined, such as peeling potatoes for the cookhouse. Emptying the latrines, or quite often, having to parade with full kit and equipment, half an hour before reveille.

### *Wednesday Xmas Eve*

Billet orderly. Gramophone spring broke so sent straight off to HMV's for new one. Electric Light laid on—Ace Mechanic! Collis is now replaced by Danny O'Brien. Drill Parade in the morning. The 'Lamp and Door' Fund Beer brought out and forth with started upon. Company Xmas Concert in the evening—"Buerscotch", and, as Major Wray said, it was better than many an ENSA Concert. Various acts—Chapman, Morris, Buck, singing, Impersonations by Rutter, Community Singing led by Corp and a delightful skit on the Company Office. Mo Martin as Major Wray and Butterworth, Sam Fuller, QM, and Gimper as his satellites. After the concert, began an organized pissup by Bill Bune ordering up 3 dozen bottles of beer. Then to Bert Hendry's but \* followed by CHQ room. There, led by choirmaster Cardew, we set off to the Sergeant's Mess, singing "While Shepherds Watch" CSM came out and we were led meekly until the mess where the officers and sergeants were engaged in a pissy liaison. Another carol, a Sam Small monologue by Dodger Green, "Just a Song at Twilight," were rewarded by beer & whisky. Another visit to CHQ and we retired to bed just on midnight. \*Witnessed the largest penis in the company an half bent that of Les Mould.

### *December 25th Xmas Day 1941*

Xmas this year has been one long succession of pin-ups so that events recorded here are necessarily vague as they form the aggregate of various talks by members of the room. Reveille 07-30, Breakfast 08:00, Room got up 08:15. Xmas Breakfast not very successful. Retired to our room where the personnel thereof divided off into curd schools, gramophone players, and eat-o-knattevers. 10:30. Ambled round to 4 Platoon and had a couple of beers there, then to CHQ, and then to the Sergeant's Mess Kitchen. Here whisky we had in the hut earlier in the morning was supplemented by gin from the CSM. He came out of the mess with a bottle of gin in his hand and distributed it to all and sum dry. He must have been well out to have offered some to Roy and myself, his arch enemies. The spirit put us on a sound foundation for the morning pinups, and with a bottle in each hand, and one in the pocket, we set off for the canteen, where we proceeded to make merry. Those present included Roy Kimber, Tubby Harris, Joe Mallen, George Wynn, Sam Briggs, Frankie Pullen, Ken Mortiner, and myself.

From 11:00, when the canteen opened, until 14:00 when the canteen shut, a bottle of beers was never out of my hand and the whole three hours consisted of a succession of knees-up, and songs, sung in a group, arms round each other, and each trying to impress the sincerity of his words upon the others. Any new diversion was immediately seized upon as an excuse for making a noise. At one period we were lustily supporting Wembley Lions Speedway! Somebody suggested riding round the camp on the water cart, and, having clambered all over it, found that the clutch was frozen, so we all shambled back to the canteen. Bill Bine and the Canadian Sergt. Took our photo, but as nobody kept still, it is not likely that they will come out successfully. Vaguely heard the King's Speech. Pipe smokes were in the majority, and Sam Fuller, matey-like, suggested that we went over to George Wynn's kit to partake of Balkan Sobrani. It was here that Bert Hendry (Ord. Serg) and Arthur Oyett (Ord. Corp) detached themselves from the throng and made their way to the Sergeant's Mess (N.B. Focal Point and Foundation of all Pin-ups) and received in all about a bottle of Canadian Rye from Pop Auyres. This had the effect of putting the said orderly NCO's in the state commonly known as "spark out". Bbert Hendry Just sat helplessly in front of his dinner, unable to eat, while Arthur Byett never even got to the mess-hall.

Xmas Dinner was excellent. Plate piled up with goose and the usual Xmas grub, followed by luscious Xmas Pudding, and accompanied by rum funnels (Big Knackers dropped all round. Roy interrupts CSM with the words "Bullshit Battles Brain". Joe Mullen proposes and toast to "Good Old Joe", but only the Bolshiies ofthe company knew which Joe he meant. Joe Mallen

follows this up by sitting on several gramophone records. Speeches and songs by the officers, and when back to billet for a short afternoon kip. At roughly 17:00 hrs mounted guard, or rather, slouched over to the guardroom with the kit slung over the shoulder. The guard was a volunteer one, and as I had planned, nothing could have been less like a guard. I missed, however, another wicked drunken orgy in the canteen.

At teatime Bert and Arthur managed to get into the mess-hall entirely oblivious of the fact that their faces had been blackened by CSM & QM in the afternoon. Very amusing, Bert telling Arthur to go and wash himself! Spent most of my sentry go in 4 platoon hut.

All the evening, the sounds of merriment coming from the canteen grew louder and louder. One glimpse through the door revealed a seething mass of bodies, reeking of stale beer. Roy Kimber was paralytic doing peculiar dances with Joe Mullen.

During the night, sounds were heard coming from CHQ but and the sergeants' mess but these subsided round about 3 o'clock.

#### *December 26th Boxing Day 1941*

Originally a free day, but orders cancelled and supposed to be an ordinary day. In spite of having had only two hours kip in the morning (3-5) felt quite sprightly and played in 7 aside football, on a horribly icy pitch, getting knocked out in the first round (6 beat 5, 4 beat CHQ., 6 beat 4) Kip in the afternoon while officers and sergeants played the rest. Slowly got up, in fact forced up by Joe Mullen and Roy round about 7 in the evening, and went to pictures – *St Louis Blues*, starring Maxine Sullivan.

#### *December 27th*

The aftermath of Xmas. Still feeling the effect of the previous two days, went on a wicked drill parade on top of the plateau, followed by a PT Parade. Nicked horrible on the former and showed boots clean at five o'clock. Map reading for education early in afternoon, and continued letter writing in afternoon. Auntie Ethel and Grandma. Played table tennis in a husked canteen in the evening.

#### *December 28th Sunday*

On officers mess with Roy Wrote to Auntie Ruth. Sam's voice slowly recovering-Suffered symptoms of laryngitis, owing to Xmas piss-up. Played several games of table-tennis in the evening, beating Sam two sets out of three. George Wynn, climbing mountain, fell on rolled 50 feet down the mountain, getting away with bruises.

#### *December 29th*

Back to the gold old days of Bre. In pitch drunkenness, had repeated "as you were's", eventually showing socks clean. Interesting day as far as parades were concerned-snow-shoe instruction, dragging, samaphore, OC's lecture, and English directly after tea. Told during lecture about coming route march to Eskifferdur. Painting copy of Stonehenge. Big natter about education, and Roy makes rash statements such as describing Stonehelge as a heap of stones.

#### *Tuesday December 30th*

Bayonet fighting, complete with wicked Sam Fuller natter. MG revision, grenade throwing, compass, rifle inspection. Painting again-Salisbury Cathedral. Joe Mullen gives us a long occurrent of his love affairs.



*Wednesday December 31st*

New Year's Eve and another epic as programme for the day. Set off in overcast weather straight up the mountains, along the pass. Turned right and gradually descended into Ekifjadur. We saw the lights of Eski at 13.30 hrs, but did not arrive at those lights until 17.00 hrs, after dark and two hours behind schedule. Had none of the usual fun until after we skated downhill. Then we had four slides in quick succession. One was of gradient roughly 2 in 1. Several ice patches, some of which sloped towards a cliff, and some of our chaps, unsteady on their feet, almost got their respective lots. Arriving at Eski, we transferred to the Nordcap which soon had us back to Budareyri. The rain, which by some miraculous chance, started coming down when we got to Eski, and just after we reached camp, turned into a downpour lasting all night. This march not quite so bad as the one of November 27th, but quite bad enough, nevertheless. George Wynn, unlucky as usual, claims his thigh again, and hobbles most of the way. Peachey, as on the previous march, conks out and is supported for most of the way.

*Thursday January 1st 1942*

The king has ordered a national day of prayer so there is an informal church parade at 11 o'clock, incidentally, the first parade. Followed by MG Semaphore. Maths under Dizzy Dyett. Went out for a supper, but cafe not open so had to be content with a NAAFI meal. Company is now beginning to shake considerably as the Co is coming Saturday. More fuss made than if the King himself was coming. Blake nicked hut got away with a charge of maligning.

*Friday 2nd*

Working on positions on top of the hiB until 13:30 when we went into canteen for debate on administration versus operation. During this debate, there are four or five men outside doing pack drill under the RP's, under no punishment but ordered on the parade for the sole reason that they were categorized M and D. By the MO on sick parade this morning. In the evening went down to the YMCA to a Whist Drive. Would have got the booby prize had there been a booby prize. Supper in cafe on Roy won third prize.

*Saturday Jan 3rd.*

On area fatigue, but this changed to scrubbing out followed by building up at the positions. Did scrubbing with Sam, and then went on bath parade. Scrubbing again in the afternoon, then a big natter around the five accompanied by tea brought in by numerous men on cookhouse fatigue. Blake, having been nicked for gambling after lights out, gets away with it again! I might mention here that the afore mentioned Blake came from the same regiment as the CSM. Did some painting in the evening.

*Sunday January 4th*

A Free Day. General lazing about for all, intermingled with gimping up all equipment. Spent a lot of time in CHQ hut playing poker. This is the great day. The CO arrived late this evening. The Great Blacke, which has been gradually intensifying for the past week, has now reached a climax. All men of any authority are fearful lest they will be clasped in irons, or sent to the saltmines, or something equally fearsome. One word of disapproval from old Muzzlewhite will set the Major's moustache bristling, the Captain's moustache drooping, the Subaallern's knees shaking, the CSM's voice waving, the sergeant's voices screaming, the Gestapo running round in small circles, all junior NCO's on the point of slinging in while they've still got the privilege, and all the privates morale at a very low point, as they suffer directly or indirectly from all these incidents.

### *Monday 5th*

There has been a noticeable improvement in the food since the scare of the CO coming. Also a similar improvement in Kits! Good job we have had snow lately, otherwise half the company would be on area fatigue. Order for the morning consist of instruction in skiing and snow shoeing. Walked about two miles before we found a suitable place, and then we had quite a lot of sport. Bert Hendry provided an amazing spectacle, progressing uphill on skis at the rate of minus 3 feet per minute. Resembled a large crab trying to climb a smooth icy surface. Driving back at camp, found Tubby Martin back in the billet, complete with fresh rumooTS, and stones from BHQ Captain. Kenyon has been shifted for daring to support the men, the mere rank and file, in a case where the transport of one company complained of unfair treatment. Rumours as to when we are leaving Iceland are now getting very wild, and if the wish is father of the thought, and the thought actual fact, we should be in England by March. However, time will tell. Semaphore in the afternoon, followed by lecture by officer of KOYLI mortar platoon. In the evening a debate on cold climate vs. Hot climate, witnessed by CO who seemed very pleased with it all. Table tennis – beaten by Sam and Ethel.

### *Tuesday 6th January*

Scheme, a replica of that of the 24th November- as before, S Platoon were infantry. Advanced quicker than before, this time under Mr. Treffgame, and with Capt. Barton setting an excessively slow step on the march along the road. Were still advancing under cover of MG's when we were surprised to hear that the Colonel had brought the scheme to a close. Very opportune as we had not yet fired our rifles. There has been no mail on the 'Lernister' which brought the Colonel. The YMCA which for all intents and purposes is a KOYLI Canteen, now resembles a Yukon Saloon when one of our chaps enters. Whether there will be a sort out or not is a subject for much discussion.

### *Wednesday 7th January*

Still and big shake for the Colonel's benefit. MG and digging in the morning. The digging, incidentally, consists of trenches leading from a stream on a higher level than the camp to our cookhouse and officer's mess. Very hard going as the ground is frozen very solid. In the afternoon, preliminaries of the company boxing. Of our room, Ernie Brooks beat Joe Tarbrick after a good fight, and Joe Mullen beat Gimper Reeves. In the evening we settled down to the proper boxing. Joe Mullen, to everyone's surprise beat Harry Carden, who was heavier, and Gus Finch beat Smudger Smith, another surprise. 5 Platoon's "Mill" team (6 men fight like fury for a minute each) beat 6 Platoon, and have to meet 4 in the finals tomorrow night. Sam Briggs, who beat Frier, and Ernie Brooks, both lost in the evening. Joe Mullen has to meet Cheeseman in the middle weight.

### *Thursday 8th January*

Dial Sight, etc in morning. NCO's on CO's lecture, so Joe Tarbruck in command of platoon. Semaphore in the afternoon after which we began to prepare our kit for the Co's kit inspection tomorrow morning. Boxing again at 9 o'clock, in which cheeseman beat Joe Mullen, Aggie Hall beat Col Ball, and Udall beat a chap from the KOYLI. Co very pleased.

### *Friday 9 January*

The big shake on. While NCO's and officers run around changing the design of the kit layout, we attempt to lay a neat and tidy kit. While waiting for the Co, and while he and his continue are in the next hut, I am put in the book for swearing. Apparently the CSM hear me and recognized the voice. Pay parade in the evening. Followed by a truck wad of mail being dished out. Received a card from Major Mayness of Shafterbury, a letter and "Melody

Maker" from home, and a scathing letter from Jack Domoney, who replied in a typical Don fashion to my martyr-like complaints about manoeuvres on the Colswolds last January. Went to cafe F2 with Roy and Tubby Harris, and ate. PS to Xmas. Company consumed 2,160 bottles of beer OI'er the holiday-there are 150 in the company, and some are light on non drinkers, so that it is obvious that those who did indulge had good cause to be merry.

*Saturday 10th January*

Route March. Captain Barton in charge. Left at 8:30 and marched round the end of the fjord. Crossing two rives which, luckily, were more or less frozen over and there were ice bridges over what water there was flowing. Ascended the mountains directly opposite Budareyri, and went up the coarse of a mountain torrent, and over snow fields. Turned round and came back the same way, arriving back at rough 3 o'clock. Ascended to about 2000 feet.

While up on the mountains, saw a boat and escort come up the fjord. Just after dinner when we got back, were pleasantly surprised to get more mail, but only got a card from Isle of Wight, an air graph card from Jack Domoney and a short letter from home. Enclosed in the latter was a letter from HMV's, Oxford Sheet, saying that they could not dispatch records which I had ordered-Disappointed.

*Sunday 11 th January*

Church Parade in morning. Much bullshit. Colonel still here, as he is going back to Reykjavik and not on to Akureyri. Courses at BHQ cancelled. Wrote letters home and to Jack Domoney. Went out for a supper with 5 other caps in the room. Ernie Brooks on the newly fanned RASe Guard at Minden Camp.

*Monday 12th January*

Wake up to find that a terrific storm is lashing the camp. The wind and the rain (70 mph) swept up the fjord from the last, drenching anyone who ventured outside the door. On area fatigue, working in the guardroom painting. On company orders in the morning, and received three extra fatigues for Friday's charge of obscene language. Spent the evening drawing a map of Libya to hang up at the end of the room together with the other maps and pictures of Joe Stalin and his generals.

*Tuesday 13th January*

Storm blew itself out at 02:00 hrs, having blown for about 27 hours. Billet orderly, and guard (camp) in evening. Uneventful night. More post-3 Melody Makers. \*

*Thursday 15th January*

On area Fatigue and Bath Parade. Another storm blew up just before dinner, and continued with ever-increasing fury throughout the night. I should say, at a rough guess.

\*Turned out in the morning just on breakfast time. Everyone not sure whether it was a false alarm or not. NCO's and officers let us down by inefficiency and we had a moan from Major Wray in a lecture after breakfast that the speed of the wind in some gusts reached 80 mph or there abouts. You are always inclined to overestimate the speed of wind, but I should say about 80. Which is some wind. During the debate in the canteen, the sides of the Nissen Hut were hearing as if pushed outside by an elephant. There was some talk of our camp being the only one with all its huts intact. If this is so, it is only clue to the work we put in when we first came here to banking up the sides with earth and turfs in the evening we battled our way through the elements to the YMCA hut to see a concert put on by the Royal Artillery plus one

of our chaps from F company. They worked under bad conditions as the electric light cables of the village had been blown down. A good show, with a good mouth organ player.

#### *Friday January 16th*

Storm still raging and carried on until teatime-thus another 27 hour gale. Seems to be a habit round these parts. The Leinster, our only hope for getting mail to England and back, is now a ground at the end of the fjord, having dragged her anchor in the gale and drifted up. On MG all morning. Lecture on German Anny and arts and crafts in the afternoon. Pay parade at 6 o'clock. Wicked arguments during evening, chiefly about Ghandi and Germany.

#### *Saturday 17th January*

Route March in the morning under Captain Barton (Major Wray was gone in the Leinster on a course to Akureyri) Marched approximately 7 miles along the Seydisfjordur Road, and then straight back in time for dinner, and just in time to escape the rain, which, after apparently debating whether to come down or not during the morning, decided on the fanner round about dinner. This march was marred by the fact that Capt. Barton had a false impression of what the Middlesex step was. He started off at 90 to the minute and about a 33 inch pace. After a bit the pace became more normal but never became entirely steady. In the afternoon, went over 4 Platoon Hut and went to pictures in the evening. Saw Fifth Avenue Girl in a much approved cinema. The projectors are now behind a wall and the screen is much better.

#### *Sunday 18th*

On potato peeling but Syd Durack stopped over and I became billet orderly. Ambled in the canteen to listen to Woody Herman. And somehow or other we started a piss up and were half canned by dinner time. Joe Mallen, who had won the snowball at the tombola the previous night, bought a round- Roy, Bert, George, Dizzy, and myself, and we continued it. We never meant to drink this morning, but the fact that it was impromptu made it all the more enjoyable. Kipped in the afternoon and played table tennis in the evening. At the mess meeting, we had a very unsatisfactory explanation of how our company funds were spent at Xmas and on extra messing. Result, a company mess meeting to be held on Tuesday.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Monday 19th*

Raining all morning as yesterday and night. Did musketry, MG and anatomy lecture instead of PT went out building assault range in the afternoon. Rained again. Education, canteen, and kip.

#### *Tuesday 20th January*

Raining all night but stopped in the morning. On a scheme in the morning. Direct and indirect fire. No I on gun and learnt quite a lot. Roads in a bad condition after the recent rains. Gun cleaning in the afternoon, followed by geography-Japan. Natter in canteen in evening with Roy, George Wynn and Co.

#### *Wednesday 21st January*

##### **The KOYLI Disaster**

Reveille and general alarm wounded almost in the same bugle call. Shambled up to gun positions with tripod on sodden ground. Sergt. Hodge, just come from Akureyri (H Coy.) in the *Esja*, up with us. Thought we up there abnormally long time – message came through to say that we were to ascertain whether it was enemy or own troops before we opened fire.

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<sup>12</sup> This was a complete failure as all accounts accounted for.

Apparently it was a genuine alarm, as a lookout post had seen some men in the mountains. These men turned out to be a company of KOYLI's who had gone on a march to Eski (see 31st December) the previous day and **had not been able to get back the same night.** Throughout the day different rumours spread, culminating in the following: Some men have arrived back safely, some are in hospital, either for injuries or exhaustion, etc. **some are still out there, missing, 8 are dead.** One rumour states that the Kensingtons are standing by for a search party at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning. Two KOYLI search parties are already out there. Went out to the cafe and pictures in the evening. Two inches of water in one part of the cinema! *Nurse Edith Cavell.* Obtained more first-hand information about the KOYLI epic. Many individual incidents. The majority of the men managed to crawl, stagger, keep moving, until they saw the lights of the outlying farmhouses of Eskifjordur. The Icelanders received these men, now completely exhausted, and nursed them until they were ready to be taken away. The sergeant major put his head in the water for a drink and drowned because he was too exhausted to take it out again. One chap staggered on with no boots. His feet in ribbons. The dead include the company commander. There is one story that two Icelanders, who were out there ski-ing, warned them to go no further, as bad weather was imminent. If only the officers in charge had put more reliance on the weather reports! This whole business has the effect of accenting the illfeeling between our regiment and the KOYLI's which has been prevalent during our stay at Budareyri, as Major Wray first created the competitive spirit in training. On our march to Eski, we knocked some time off the KOYLI's reconnaissance platoon's march over the same distance, so that it was in trying to out-march us that the deaths were caused.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Thursday 22nd January*

On RASe fatigues, shifting crates of tinned food at the RASe ration store. There is to be a big church parade on Sunday. First parade in the afternoon was "resting on your arms reversed." Followed by a lecture on India by the PT Sergeant. Rained all day.

#### *Friday 23rd January*

Semaphore Test. Sergeant's bunk orderly. Good scrounge. 8 men detailed for pall-bearing, and a fatigue all day digging graves. Detailed for pennant mess orderly for tomorrow and following week. Arts and Crafts at 4 o'clock. Went to ENSA pictures – Target for Tonight.

#### *Saturday*

Henceforth for a week shall be in the mess-hall all day until roughly 6 o'clock. 300 plates twice daily apart from cleaning the mess-hall up and cutting the bread. Funeral of the 8 men who have now been found.

#### *Sunday*

Church Parade but not on it myself.

#### *Monday*

Mess hall. Missed ski-ing. Boat in with one sack of mail for us, but none for me. Have not played tom bola for quite a long time now, since I noticed that the sergeants were picking up about two kronur every hand. The weather . lately has been colder than usual, plenty of rain, but with snow for the last two days.

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<sup>13</sup> This sad incident is commemorated in Budareyri to this day. I painted the crosses for the eight victims. But these wouldn't crosses. Made by the Royal Engineers, have been replaced by the British military graves agency by solid headstones. (see Wednesday, 4th February)

*Tuesday 27th January*

Mess Hall. Photo taken by Bob Foster.

*Wednesday and Thursday Ditto.*

Letter from home.

*Friday 30th January*

### **Ski-Snow Shoes**

The weather lately has been continual rain and snow, gradually getting colder so that the rain is replaced by snow. The ground is nearly always white nowadays. Today practically the whole company is on firing practice. When I say 'whole', I mean whole as even corporals and lance-corporals are on fatigues in camp! We took with us as part of our personal equipment the new ski-snow shoe, a combination of ski and snow shoe which tries to combine the qualities of both. A small shoe and short ski for lightness. Mass-produced obviously, with none of the quality finish of our skis. We got out about 3 miles along the Seydisfjordur road and while 4 Platoon went firing, we got in some practice on the new equipment, having quite a lot of fun. Quite easy once you get the knack. Of course we all got ambitious and started skiing with them down quite a steep slope with rocks in the way. We came down in every conceivable way except on our feet. Topper Brown and Joe Tarbruck were the stars. Between them they performed every known and unknown type of somersault, putting circus acrobats to shame. After sandwiches and tea we got cracking with skis, but had to break off just as we were getting into our stride. Other equipment which has recently been added are Nansen Sledges and 24 more pairs of skis.

*Saturday 31st*

On firing practice in the morning, taking skis with us. Got an 8" group with 5 of my rounds, but more interested in the skiing. Also went skiing in the afternoon with Wilmot and Sergt. Grant up the hill to Happy Valley where we found a good run. Came down the whole way on skis. Calculate I fell down about 60 times. Went to cafe with Sam Briggs. Bought more tobacco. Now have a pound of Four Square.<sup>14</sup>

*Sunday 1st February*

Intended to go skiing in the morning but skis taken away. Just as well perhaps as on RASe guard this afternoon and Jack Teagarden on at 10:30 in the canteen.<sup>15</sup> Mounted guard unceremoniously, and proceeded to have a cushy guard all night. One chap, a lance corporal in the KOYLI coppers. In the guard room. Also a chap who talked until 4 o'clock in the morning about his sex life. Johnny Homewood and I explored a possible ski run above Minden Camp, and spent the last shift in the cookhouse where we watched a cook.

*Monday 2nd February*

A day off as I have just come off RASe guard. Just my luck that every one should be skiing (It has been snowing for the last few days on and off). Dare not go out as this would place all RASe guardsmen in danger of being whacked on fatigues, etc. Spent some of the time in the village trying to buy a pair of skis. Co Op sell them but at present have no harness in stock until the *Esja* comes in from Reykjavik. Spent most of the afternoon taking about Eli's

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<sup>14</sup> Did not smoke myself – never have – but no doubt intended to take home for Dad.

<sup>15</sup> This must have been a radio broadcast. JT was one of my favorite jazz trombonist.

exploits with his Guy Ant<sup>16</sup> truck down on the South Coast and Aldershot. He had a narrow escape today when he got his truck stuck behind one of the cafes, came back for a tow, and arrived at his truck again just in time to stop Hardy from backing it over the edge. Painted in the evening, and went to see George Formby in an ENSA film and show.

#### *Tuesday 3rd February*

On area-cum-officers mess fatigue. Snow stopped and sun now shining on the mountain tops. We now peel our own spuds after breakfast; as we are so short of men that there is rarely anyone on parade. Several men on courses, together with boxers on a "PT. Course," have gone to Reykjavik.

#### *Wednesday 4th*

Went ski-ing all the morning, having a very enjoyable time. Have got over the preliminary balancing feats and am now attempting (emphasis on the attempting) turns and small jumps. Snow is patchy, partly soft and partly crusty. This afternoon's rain didn't do it any good either. Looks as if it's going to get warmer. Detailed in the afternoon for a sign-writing job down at the R.E.'s which turned out to be **painting the names on the crosses for the eight graves up on the hill**. Did some more painting in the evening, mostly touching up, and finished off one of a Berkshire Village. Today, owing to a silly order, several blokes were pitched by the Fat Pig (CSM) for wearing the newly-issued rubber knee-boots on first parade. 3 Days C.B. (Confined to Barracks) for wearing waterproof boots in a place like Iceland is, I think, a bit thick. Another seaplane capsized whilst alighting on the fjord.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Thursday, 5th February*

On cookhouse, bath parade. Amusing 10 minute talks for education, the first period for several days. Went out to cafe with Roy, Tubby Harris, and Kenoltimer. Talked politics.

#### *Friday 6th February*

On Area-cum-Sergeants' Mess Fatigue-finished at 9:20 in the morning, and 2:40 in the afternoon! Stayed in painting, etc. In the evening. Jock Mailey, pissed as per Xmas Time, sorts me out for some quite innocent chance remark made by me several days ago. I was awakened by being pummelled by Jock, but was stuck inside sleeping bag. Joe Tarbuck sorted things out. Gradually cooled things over and he went to bed, and after deciding to shake hands with me, why, I don't know.

#### *Saturday*

##### **Walking on Water**

Route march under Captain Barton. Set off on the Seydisfjordur road and suddenly bore left and started walking across the shallow part of the fjord. At which Pt. Beauchamp wanted to know if he "thought he was Jesus or something." Approached the far (deeper) river with intentions of crossing it and marching down the other side of the fjord but, as we were unable to cross without getting the whole company's feet wet, we skirted the stream and walked up the Egilstadir Valley for about seven miles. We stopped on the snow-bound road, and the sun actually shone on us for about half-an-hour. First time since the middle of November. A brisk

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<sup>16</sup> An old design, characterized by frequent breakdowns, and a constantly leaking radiator. Eli had a menu of cures. Including chewing gum and Sunlight soap. In our accident report. At Aldershot. He claimed that the damage was caused by being hit by a steam-roller.

<sup>17</sup> This was one of the Northrop sea-planes (float-planes) of the local Norwegian air squadron.

march back, followed by a kip for a couple of hours. Went out in the evening to a (to us) new cafe which seems to be better than all the others.<sup>18</sup>

### *Sunday 8th February*

Shambled up in the morning, a typical Sunday morning shamble. The weather was not too good in the morning-slight fall of snow-which rather put the tin hat on our (George Wynn, Sam Briggs, Ms. Morris, and myself) plan to go mountaineering all day. However, determined not to be done out of our day's outing (outing by Chust) we set-off with rations, obtained after a horrible natter with Holland, to the extreme left hand valley up the fjord valley. Took a pair of Wellingtons with us for wading across the two streams but found the only way of crossing the second one was by taking off boots and socks. Never had any of us experienced such icy cold as the water in that stream. However. Dried and thawed on the other side we continued at a brisk pace until our objective was reached but did not have the time to go very far. As far as sights were concerned though, we could hope for nothing better than the sight of the mountain torrent which flowed down the valley in a sort of gorge precipitating over a sheer drop of roughly 50 feet shaped in a perfect horse shoe. Coming back, we went down by the side of the seething cauldron underneath the fall and got right underneath the cascade by means of a natural cavern which fell back, dropping with icicles, and lined with frozen spray, for about 10 feet. Similar to the pathway at Niagara Falls, but, of course, in miniature. We ate our rations and also heated up some cold tea over a fire which we built from biscuit wrappers and frozen wood from the stunted trees. On our return, it got colder and we had frozen battledress after shambling through the stream, shit-or-bust. We arrived back in camp about 4 o'clock, and dried out. In the evening, I washed seven pairs of socks (Quite a washerwoman nowadays) and then went to the cafe again where the subject of conversation was mainly our dogs, Wernbey ice-hockey and White City sports.<sup>19</sup>

### *Monday*

Started out to the firing point on foot in deep snow, wearing the new skisnow-shoes, and pushing and pulling the Nansen sledges. This combination was hard going. It would have been better if the sledges had handles on them and if we had the snowshoes off. Luckily I was sent back to start my job of painting the crosses of the eight KOYLI casualties down at the R.E.s. While there I heard of another party of KOYLI, lost in Bren Gun carriers who had gone to take rations to Egilstadir. They were afterwards found quite safe with tents, sleeping bags, etc. Once bitten, twice shy! In the evening (the boys have been very cold firing today) we went into the canteen for a cloth-model war game between the platoons, which proved to be quite interesting. Notice on education board about forthcoming Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

### *Tuesday 10th February*

It has been turning cold lately, but today it is very, very, cold. Our stream has frozen up solid almost in a single day. Water in the huts frozen. Paint frozen. Distemper freezing as you put it on. Nails sticking to carpenters' bare hands as they try to drive them in. Platoon on an exercise today but I carried on painting. Some mail in, including a gramophone spring from HMV. Papers, magazines, and *Melody Makers* now litter the kits and indeed the whole hut for the next few days.

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<sup>18</sup> This one was probably opened up by "Peter" a local Icelander who had an ancient (extremely ancient – about 1923 vintage) Chevrolet truck and who overhauled the engine himself.

<sup>19</sup> \*Events during the walk-(i) Mo Morris remarking that it was "a bit nippy" when the temperature was about 20° below freezing. And (ii) both George Wynn and Sam throwing the waders into the stream. George failed in throwing one across to next bloke to cross while Sam failed in showing him how to do it! After the war, "Throwing the Wellie" became an event at local fairs, almost as popular as the "Nurdling" races.



*Wednesday 11th February*

A replica of the cloth-model exercise but this time an actual rehearsal. CSM and R.P.s (Regimental Police) are the target. I would likely to have an analysis of the thoughts in everyone's minds as they approach the Fat Pig, rifles in hand. The sun has at last shone on Budareyri. Yesterday we saw it for a few minutes, and today it is slightly higher. Warmer today (it couldn't be much colder!)

*Thursday*

Today it is extremely cold. No actual figures available but it must be well below 0° F. Firing in the morning in which everyone was, shall we say, chilly. Stanyer, just back from a course. Takes the company up on the plateau for a drill parade. This is speedily ended when some chaps are observed to have white ears! Ended up with 15 blokes thawing out in the company office. Major Wray, Bill Bune, and various other sundry absentees from camp, came back tonight. Wray's first action was to have the generator going with 12 o'clock for the benefit of the officers' mess. Bill tells us horrible stories of his Arctic Course in which he went out for several days in the mountains, freezing up, and God knows what. Letter from Hardo.<sup>20</sup>

*Friday 13th*

Still painting, on my last cross. Slightly warmer. None of the snow blowing down from the mountains as it was yesterday. Some of the laundry hanging up to dry in absolutely stiff in the morning. Blokes are now practicing a lot with the new kit, arctic tents, packs, and so forth. Still cold but gradually getting warmer. Bing Crosby in *Starmaker* and Artie Shaw.

*Saturday 14th*

Painting all day. Crosses finished but various odd jobs have cropped up. Took four paintings to Sgt. Lawrence for the exhibition. Borrowed an atlas from the education hut library which has quite a few good educational books. Watched Bob Foster and another bloke do some photographic enlarging.

*Sunday 15th*

Free Day. Watched our 1st XI beat 'C' Coy KOYU 4-2 after a good game on a snow-and-ice covered pitch. In the afternoon went out with Roy and Tubby Harris to cafe F-2 where I wrote 2 long letters to John Walke and Fred Wiltshire.

*Monday 16th February*

Finished off completely down the RE's. Camp now looking different as Major Wray, full of ideas from Reykjavik, added to which is the fact that the General is coming and the great shake is just shaking itself together. In the evening Stanyer gives us an interesting and very disheartening lecture upon Arctic life in Arctic conditions.

*Tuesday 17th*

Detailed for coal fatigue in the morning. With Tubby Martin who gave a demonstration of how to "swing the lead."<sup>21</sup> Apparently his idea of it is to do absolutely nothing. Wasted time most of the morning, only shoveling one load of coal. Odds and ends in the afternoon. Went to see *Great Victor Herbert* in the evening.

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<sup>20</sup> Hardo: Walter Hardy, an old school friend, who was (not much later) killed while flying training in Rhodesia.

<sup>21</sup> A naval expression derived from sailors who could claim (probably while fishing off the side of the ship) that they were "swinging the lead" which was a primitive way to test the depth of the water.

### *Wednesday 18th February*

On cookhouse fatigue. Finished at 10 and was promptly detailed to go out with Starnyer and Sergt. Burne up the mountain with rucksacks, Everest carriers (and sub-section's gun kit), a small sledge on which a gun can be mounted, and skis. At first the loads seem pretty heavy, but once you get them firmly settled on your back, you don't notice them quite so much. Rather like carrying cocoa. We got to the first snow patch and practiced pulling the sledge with gun. Etc., which proved quite successful, and then we got down to what we had been looking forward to-the skiing. At first, we were a bit uncertain (acrobatics by Les Mould and Bert Hendry) but for once, owing to the fact that we were only a small party, we had time to adjust the skis properly and thus had a good time, by far my best day's ski-ing. Though Budareyri only saw the sun for the first time, on the 10th of February, today, during brilliant weather, the sun shone from around 10 10 about 2:30. We went up the hill in short-sleeve order. Sam Briggs and Johnny Homewood took some photographs, including skiing, which, if they come out should look O.K. Arrived back about 3 o'clock and jagged in, quite pleased with myself. Sam Briggs tactfully admitted he had suggested me for the expedition (there were only two from each platoon) and as I was in a good humour then, I did not have any usual natter. In the evening did some odd jobs-now drawing various maps from an atlas out of the education hut. Maybe the stuff will come in useful one day.

### *Thursday 19th February*

On painting till 10 o'clock, then out firing with rifles and machine guns. Cap!. Barton in charge. Got quite wild, and language followed freely. Hardly anyone hit the target with snap shooting while Topper and I didn't know how to single shot load (apart from a delayed action gun) Very hot, or so it seemed, with the sun beating down. I was sweating freely. Recalled to camp at midday. The *Leinster* is in. One or two chaps back from Reykjavik. One or two, including Joe Tarbuck going. No mail in yet. With a bit of luck I may get on transport again, what with Joe Tarbuck going and some new trucks on the way. On RASe guard during the evening, thus missing an ENSA concert.

### *Friday 20th*

#### **Ski-ing Instruction**

On a ski-ing expedition with the Norwegian Instructor. A party of 20 started off with Bill Bune as senior NCO all equipped with skis, sticks, rucksacks full of kit, including cocoa containers. Advanced right the way up Happy Valley until we reached the region where the snow was continuous and put on skis. Some chaps stayed on the lower slopes to learn the elementary stuff while the rest of us who kidded ourselves we could get along all right on them carried on with the instructor. We had about 3 hours skiing in bright sunshine (though the temperature couldn't have been much above freezing). I now know how to stop (snowplough) turn (snowplough and other peculiar shit-or-bust methods) and go diagonally down on slope. Note-I know how but cannot always put it into practice. We came back pretty quickly-that Norwegian can't half step it out, and arrived back for a late dinner. Pay parade before tea. The GOC has been round and the shake IS over. Pinks is back, and is now T.O. (Transport Officer).

### *Saturday 21st February*

Several parades in the morning in which we practiced with Everest carriers and Godfrey sledges. In the afternoon, missed ski-ing and went down to the R.E.'s to get some paint for a new job-truck number plates. Did a bit of scrounging and fixed up a shelf in the evening. Then went to ENSA film show at the YMCA seeing Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. Bit of fun at bedtime when some of our blokes find their sleeping bags inside out.

*Sunday 22nd February*

### **Short Mountain Climb**

Went out with Sam Briggs, George Wynn, and Mo Morris on an expedition. Waded across the top of the fjord in Wellington boots, hid them under a boat, turned left and climbed diagonally up the mountain. Good going until we got about 1500 feet up and then we encountered snow. Not ordinary soft powdery snow, but hard crusty slippery snow, which we climbed with the aid of footholds at an angle of about 45°. Couldn't get very far because of the snow, and came back a slightly easier way. Took several photos. Gramophone spring broken again. Tubby Martin says there is a flaw in the machine.<sup>22</sup>

*Monday 23rd February*

Painting all day. Lecture in the evening by Stanyer - sleeping out in tents, and we find that we are to be the guinea pigs tomorrow night. Went to pictures (Civvy<sup>23</sup>) – *Saint Takes Over*. Sharing tent with Sam.

*Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th*

### **Camping Out**

Spent all morning preparing our kit for the night jaunt. Rucksacks contain inner sleeping bag, spare pullovers. Outside, underneath, a blanket rolled in a groundsheet. Two men to a tent, one carries tent, and the primus stove. In the pouches at the side of the rucksacks are things like mess tins, paraffin, chocolate, rations, etc. We left just after dinner in the following dress – canvas over battle-dress, leather jerkin, fur cap, drill order, rucksack, skis. After a pretty fast climb, very slippery up the ridge, we arrived at our destination, not a long way from camp, just at the end of "Happy Valley"<sup>24</sup>. We pitched tents in gulleys and having got everything inside, went off for an hour's ski-ing before dark. Very cold, with a wind blowing up (later discovered the temperature to be about 15° below zero) The anti-Pinks campaign is going badly. He carried Crane's rucksack, and then gave Tubby Harris his fur cap. Roy is just itching for something to criticize. Got back into tent and promptly drummed up cocoa and got into sleeping bags. Tent gets marvelously hot with primus stove. Temporary set-back when a mess tin of cocoa spilled all over my sleeping bag. Soon got dozy and got down to it. Slept well until round about 3 o'clock, when Sam and I woke up and drummed up. From then onwards we dozed and chatted, with a miniature blizzard blowing outside, until Vie Eydman came round and announced that it was nearly 8 o'clock. How were we to know without a watch? Packed up and returned to camp, looking like Scott coming back from the South Pole. Breakfast and dried our kit out, etc. Kit inspection, quite easy, followed by a lecture by Wray who moaned about our late reveille. He also learnt something about the enmity between us and the KOYUs and told us he would try to straighten things out. Also told us he was going away for a month's Arctic course. Silent cheers. Saw ENSA's climbing cinema show – *Union Pacific*.

*Thursday*

Cooking dinners out. Prepared kit in the morning and left about 10 o'clock for the now familiar Happy Valley. (or Fox Farm Valley as it is also called). Barton in charge and as usual started off too fast and chose the worst way up. We got up there and started making ourselves

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<sup>22</sup> He was probably correct as in a later entry to this diary, we were playing the gramophone again, so we must have repaired it.

<sup>23</sup> Short for "civilian.. – as opposed to the army film unit.

<sup>24</sup> The elevated valley. At about 1,200 altitude. Above Budareyri. It was quite a climb to get up to the valley.

comfortable in our two –man tents.<sup>25</sup> This time I was with Roy Kimber, and we soon got down to the grub stakes. i.e. Machonachies<sup>26</sup>. As we didn't put water to it, like our cooks do, it was very enjoyable. Everyone got their primuses going except Cpl. Falk, the cook, who burnt his tent! Snow too soft for skiing. Came down in the afternoon. Some attempted to ski down but got down slower than those on foot. Barton chose a very steep way down and moaned because some chaps slid down. Silly bastard! It was sheer impossibility to walk it. Went to pictures again in the evening – *The First Rebel* (civvy picture house)

#### *Friday 27th*

Painting number plates. We have had quite a lot of snow during the last couple of days and it looks as if there is still a lot more to come. Went out with Tubby Martin in the afternoon and “won” a broom. Pay parade in the evening. Whist Drive which had been planned in aid of the Middlesex and Kensington Prisoners of War Fund cancelled because of lack of support. We had planned to go out but we finished up by having a natter in CHQ hut. Wrote home.

#### *Saturday*

Went ski-ing in the morning. Skis have not been issued to orderlies, rangetakers, and section corps, and commanders. After changing his mind several times, Bill Bune lent me his skis, which I found were loose and beyond tightening. Had a few runs but jagged in after I came close to breaking my leg when one ski stuck right in the ground. Had a glorious kip in the afternoon but woke up to find that I could hardly move my leg. Went down the cafe in the evening, however. Sam's photos are back. Ordered 8 kronurs-worth more.

#### *Sunday March 1st*

Church Parade in the morning but my leg prevented my from going. We woke up this morning to find ice over all our washing water, our laundry frozen solid, the floor like an ice rink, and frost over all the metal parts of the hut. Went down the cafe in the afternoon.

#### *Monday 2nd March*

Gun cleaning. P.T. Baths. Lecture on skis by Bill Bune. Waxed them and generally messed about. On guard in the evening. The weather has now changed and with the thaw has come rain and wind. Quite an ordinary guard. Lights have failed and we are now reduced to candles until the new generator starts working.

#### *Tuesday*

Went on parade – dial sight and was told about 8:45 that I was on orders. Found after enquiry that it was for missing a parade with paybooks the previous night. Stanyer took orders and dished out 2 days C.B., the bastard,. No need for the QM to have changed as the parade was spread over 3 days. Also I was on guard. However, its just a way the army has of getting you thoroughly browned off. They have a new scheme in hand. Each man has to hand in an empty matchbox, we are not told why. Answered usual defaulters calls, including some wiring around the coal dump in the pissing rain. Now doing a bit more MG as part of the routine. Also, education, which had lapsed is now revived in view of the forthcoming examinations.

#### *Wednesday*

Up early for ‘jankers’. Fetched the marmite – each room now gets a can of this delicacy from the cookhouse before BRC. In the morning detailed for rock-climbing, but owing to the stormy weather we spent the time in the can.teen, Wilmot, now a two-pipper, in charge,

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<sup>25</sup> As on the previous camping out, the temperature was so cold that the metal pegs stuck to my fingers!

<sup>26</sup> Tinned soup – a universal part of British Army rations.

practicing knots and discussing rock-climbing in general. MG and education in the afternoon. Whist drive in the evening. Several weeks ago each man was issued with a piece of service flannelette 8"x4" to keep for an emergency. We had to show this on BRC the other morning and tomorrow 30-odd blokes are on orders, myself included, for failing to produce this most necessary part of our equipment. At the boxing some time ago, the ropes of the ring were wrapped in flannelette just for appearances sake! Miles of it! Wrote to Auntie Ethel.

#### *Thursday*

Gun drill, PT in the morning. All our room on orders in the afternoon. Rather an amusing situation to see a company office full of blokes, the officer calling a roll, and all being let off with one fatigue. Ernie Brooks was also on orders for a small matter of coal and cheese under his bed during room inspection and his punishment is 3 extra billet orderlies! Went out with Sam in the evening after dodging in the afternoon.

#### *Friday 6th March*

Billet orderly. Nabbed for tinning<sup>27</sup> in the morning. After dinner, discovered my leather jerkin in the stores. Yesterday, the company was on parade in masse while I inspected all jerkins, and through various connections I eventually found it. The way I look at it, the QM was trying to make me pay for a new jerkins as a penalty for not inscribing my name in it in the orthodox fashion. Dodged it in the afternoon. All went down John's cafe in the evening.

#### *Saturday*

Went out ski-ing in the morning with a party under Bill Bune. Had a bloody good time, getting down an awkward run quite successfully. There is another blitz on-clean rubber boots. Out here, in absolute shit weather, we have to keep our rubber boots by our beds, while we are only allowed to wear our F.P. (frost-proof<sup>28</sup>) boots when ordered to. Worked off extra fatigue in the afternoon – lucky – on mess-hall. Ruddle and Gedge collected 480 kronur today for the Prisoners of War Fund. Good considering only 45 kronur was put in the collection box on pay parade. Rumours of a boat due in the beginning of this week. A few odd letters have filtered through by a devious route, among the mail is a newspaper with an account of the KOYLI disaster in headlines.

#### *Sunday 8th March*

### **Mountaineering**

A BRC on a Sunday! Usual bullshit. After breakfast set off on a mountaineering expedition. Party consisted of Sam Briggs, Ernie Brooks, Tubby Martin, Gus Finch, Roy Kimber, and myself. Set off at a steady pace, making for the left end of the escarpment. Arrived at the bottom of the rock face at about 11 o'clock. Started to climb up but party divided their opinions as to possibility of ascent, so, to keep all together, skirted the bottom of the mountain in an attempt to find a better way up. Impracticable owing to steep snow slopes, so wandered back to original position where We found Coope who was on an expedition of his own (He has already been up once) Decided to make the attempt again and made a laborious progress upwards. Eventually made the top of the precipice, the party now having dwindled to Coope, Roy, and myself. The others were brewing tea down below, dodging falling rocks. Ascent not without incident. Roy got the cramp at a critical moment while hanging on to my legs. Got to the top and had a rest, eating our rations. The top, by the way, is merely a gradually sloping plateau, oblong in shape, with the cliff we ascended as one end of the oblong. Not

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<sup>27</sup> Probably making use of old petrol tins for various purposes.

<sup>28</sup> These were special boots and issued two sizes too big to allow for the extra pairs of socks that we wore when on expeditions up on Happy Valley.

relishing the idea of descending the same way as we came up, we retreated across the top of the mountain to find a gradual snow slope down the left side of the plateau. The snow becomes quite smooth at the top, gradually getting steeper at the sides. These slopes lead down into a long valley, entirely covered with perfectly smooth snow. Coope lost his footing and slid downhill for about 300 yards. Quite a sight to see him disappearing from view over the edge. Roy and I went further in an attempt to find an easier way down but the search was fruitless and, in the end, we too slid down. We followed the course of the stream for a while, but when it hurtled down a series of waterfalls, we abandoned the stream and came down in the next small mountain to the left of our mountain. Rejoined Sam and company down the bottom and returned to camp. The weather has been marvelous all day, with brilliant sunshine from 8 o'clock until 6 o'clock. The clocks have been put on an hour this weekend. In the evening, there was a rum issue in celebration of the stupendous sum collected for the prisoners of war. Sam Briggs went out for it at 9 o'clock. At 9:15, he was back in the room well pissed. He rolled Tubby Martin and Gus Finch out of bed; sung a duet with me; wrapped half of Tubby's sleeping bag round his neck and climbed up the stove pipe; insisted that Roy should change jackets with him; played waterfalls with cans of water; tried to set fire to my socks; and was finally enticed into bed, still wanting to shave before he went to kip. The next visitors of the evening were Ruddle and Gedge, collecting odd aurar for the fund. Then came Tubby Harris, Pink-Gyett and Law, all well away on gin. Half the company got pissed tonight on the company rum issues.

#### *Monday 9th*

Went skiing in the morning, Wilmot in charge. Norwegian instructor. Very slippery skis but had quite a good time. Wilmot brought us down at the double in the record time of 22 minutes. On officers mess in the afternoon-lush cups of tea. Then education lecture and tea and cakes in the evening.

#### *Tuesday*

Company out firing, but on a painting job myself-Pink's wardrobe. Some of the chaps took some rations up into the valley in preparation for the coming scheme. Went down the cafe with Mo Morris in the evening.

#### *Wednesday 11th March*

Spent morning preparing Arctic kit and checking up emergency clothing, etc. Football in the afternoon with 4 Platoon. The *Zaanstrom* is in, the first boat in since the 19th February. This boat has been laid up at Seydisfjordur for some time, but has finally arrived with 13 new trucks. These new trucks have had a bit of a bashing en route. Shall not be on the three-day sleepingout stunt owing to the examinations.

#### *Thursday 12th*

Detailed as one of a party of 12 men on an unloading party under Jock Hartery. Went down to the *Zaanstrom*, and had a hard days work manhandling timber. The trucks were beginning to come off during the evening.

#### *Friday 13th*

More work down the jetties. Three of us went to the first jetty where the Nova has pulled in. Took of a *Quod*<sup>29</sup> and also a piano for the ENSA show. Which has come with the boat. Work to continue during the evening – NAAFI goods including beer, but our party relieved by

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<sup>29</sup> Heavy four-wheel-drive truck, with towing equipment.

another squad, which included most of the men back from Reykjavik. Pay parade in the evening.

*Saturday 14th*

### **A Night Out**

Billet orderly until 9:30 when everything was dropped as the Alarm went and we all dashed up the hill to the positions with kit, knee-deep in snow. After cleaning guns, rest of day free. Went down to the cafe with Roy and Ken in the water truck, after which we went to the ENSA show. More tea and cakes in F2, then drifted into the Education Hut with Eric Etherington, where we had quite an enjoyable time, listening to some classics on records. Back at the billet, about 9:30, the door opens and Ernie Brooks falls in the door, supported by Tubby Harris. Obviously laden with some of the new Canadian beer. A story is unfolded of how Tubby Harris, Tubby Martin, and Ernie went in the NAAFI, lapped up high speed in the stipulated hour time limit, and then started throwing insults around about “Norwegian Greyhounds” and whatnot – and with a NAAFI-full of KOYLI! Pulling Ernie with them, they went into the cafe where he tried to seduce the Icelandic waitress. They then dragged him home to the billet. Ernie then gets delirious and mutters and shouts all manner of threats at the KOYLIs while we undress him and get him to bed, where he had a fight with the wall. Eventually we put him on the floor where he passes out of his delirium into a coma. Next morning remembers nothing after the NAAFI. The weather has been bad since Thursday. Snow, sometimes blizzard-like until tonight when it turned to rain. The party which went up into the hills on Thursday afternoon, are still up there, practically snowed in. Should come back tomorrow. A party visited them today and they seem to all right except Kimber L. (not Roy) who has diarrhea! The mail came off the Nova yesterday morning. One letter and parcel of papers from home.

*Sunday 15th*

A leisurely reveille. Did some odd jobs until the canteen opened and we went into the canteen to sample the new Canadian Beer. Drank 6 or 7 bottles in about an hour and then slowly passed out. That beer is vile stuff. The label says that it contains 2 ½ % proof spirits. How much improved spirits, that is the question! Anyway, I was spark out in the afternoon, having been put to bed by Bill Bumpstead, who incidentally, put Roy to bed as well, and tucked in Ernie Brooks and Sam. Roy spent about half an hour down the latrines with the hope of dying there. On RASC guard an hour down the latrines with the hope of dying there. On RASE guard after tea. Managed to stagger out to guard-mounting, swayed in the ranks, leering around at everyone, but somehow managed to get through it. Quite a good guard as guards go-kipped from 10 o'clock onwards-but the hot atmosphere of the guardroom mixed with the chill of the RASE canteen, assisted by my lessened resistance due to alcohol, gave me a sort of chill.

*Monday*

Morning off-hid out in CHQ hut reading. English examination in the afternoon. In CHQ again in the evening, playing cards and whatnot. *Esja* in, but gone again before dinner.

*Tuesday*

### **New Truck**

Assigned the job of painting the plates of the new trucks but this fell through as they are still packed up. Just before dinner, told by Corporal Clifford that I was taking over one of the new trucks. A new truck! These were 15-cwt Bedfords, much better than the old Morris Commercials and Guy Ants. “Lucky bastard” is the general opinion. Map-reading exam. in

the afternoon. Kip early in the evening directly after tea, trying to sweat the chill out. Tubby Harris ends his Sergeants' Mess scrounge and goes on Transport. Now in this hut.

#### *Wednesday 18th*

Reported sick with symptoms of flu, but with a normal temperature, only got M and D<sup>30</sup>. On trucks in the morning. Mine is quite bashed about – windscreens, etc, and all tools missing. Imperial geography exam. In the afternoon. Another early night.

#### *Thursday 19th*

Now have to be on parade for maintenance, ¼ hour after reveille. Against my natural instincts. Truck in shitty state. Still raining. Has been raining practically continuously since Saturday when the snow stopped. Maths in the afternoon finishes off exams. Small boats in but no mail.

#### *Friday 20th March*

##### **Drive to Egilstadir**

After breakfast, given a ¼ hour to get truck ready for a journey. Wicked shambles to gelling water, petrol, works ticket rations, and safety margin kit. Now Platoon Commander's Driver, Pinks. Taking him out this morning on a reconnaissance with Wilmot (Sinfield) and Sgt. Holt. Left at about 10 o'clock and went straight up the Seydisfjordur Road. Eventually reached Egilstadir Hotel, where we stopped for coffee and cakes. Road extremely bad-very like porridge after a week's rain. The snow patches very nasty. Find my work cut out to keep in Sinfield's tracks. Then went over the Lagerfljot (bridge) and on to the Akureyri Road for about seven miles. There had lunch and returned. This is the worst road I have ever seen, not to mention drive over! On the whole journey, Sinfield got stuck in the snow four times and I got stuck three. Quite a record! Pay and Mail in the evening. Changed oil in sump – filled up with petrol. Letter from home and from Auntie Ruth.

#### *Saturday 21st March*

Started a good morning's maintenance with truck on the ramp. Greased all nipples, checked oil in gearbox, and tightened nuts. Went on a short convoy drive to the CO Camp. Did U-boats in the afternoon. Sort some paint from the RE's for the new plates. Went out to cafe in the evening. First time I've been out in the evening since last week.

#### *Sunday 22nd March*

Played football for 5 Platoon against 4 in the morning. On a swamp of a pitch. A good, fast, game which we just lost 5-4. Cafe in afternoon. Weather has cleared. Lovely sunshine but a strong wind is springing up. Wrote home.

#### *Monday*

T.O.E.T.<sup>31</sup> - Everyone is now in the process of passing through all manner of test in gun, rifle, semaphore, etc. Transport engaged in getting loads of stones and laying them in the lines (parking area) in an attempt to get the trucks parked on a ffoo surface. Painting the new number plates – colour changed. Lovely day – the fjord looks like a piece of the Blue Mediterranean. Drew up petrol in the evening. Short convoy Drive to C.O. Camp early next morning.

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<sup>30</sup> An abbreviation (which I have forgotten) for light duties. I.e. excluding route marches.

<sup>31</sup> Probably an abbreviation relating to "Tests of Efficiency" or something similar.



### *Tuesday*

More stoning. Fine in the morning but about dinnertime the temperature dropped with amazing rapidity, and it was freezing in the afternoon, with a high wind blowing and snow in the air. This is about the first time I have seen the transport working while the rest of the company are kipping in the huts. And were the transport annoyed! The Brigadier is due in tomorrow, and, as usual, the War can stand still while everyone prepares for him as if he were Haile Selassie or the Aga Khan or someone, two letters, one from home and one from Buck<sup>32</sup>.

### *Wednesday 25th March*

Painting in the morning – another colour scheme! Preparing for sleeping out tomorrow. 6 Platoon have been out since Monday in the hills. Thick snow on the ground this morning and more coming down. They returned at about dusk, much the worse for wear. Apparently the snow had drifted too deep and tents were collapsing. Should think that our expedition tomorrow will be cancelled. FNSA pictures in evening – *Contraband*.

### *Thursday*

A clear day but very cold. Scheme cancelled but most of the boys went up to get the gun kit which 6 platoon had left up there. A petrol-less day for the transport so bags of maintenance. Nabbed in the evening by Cpl Clifford. To paint the number plates. Apparently it is of world-wide importance that these plates shall be done tonight. Standing and Stone helped me paint 44 on 44 on these bastard bits of tin.

### *Friday*

Finished off the plates. Convoy drive to Eskifjordur. Held up for a while because my radiator boiled over. Discovered that whilst filling it in the morning, ice blocked the pip and gave the impression of being full when there were only a few pints in. After many halts while George Wynn repaired Cpt Clifford's bike, while we got Tom Newitt out of the snow, and other inconveniences, we eventually reached Eski, where we repaired to the cafe for eat and all cakes. Return journey less eventful. Pay Parade. Went down the cafe. Has been fine all day, brilliant sunshine and blue skies, but a few spots of snow fell in the evening. Sam and Jock went up the hills digging.

### *Saturday 28th March*

Snowing hard at reveille, with about four inches already on the ground. Cleaned up tools in shelter of truck cabs. TOET Pistol. Took my paintings down to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. They want the prize-winning entries of last time for the Brigadier's benefit. Cafe in the evening.

### *Sunday 29th March*

Eight of our fellows took some rations up to the camp in the hills. Returned about 8:30 covered in snow and with Sam and Jock who went out on Friday to dig snowholes, etc. Apparently the snow, which still continues today, is getting deep. Did some painting-copy of Veronica Lake, the film star, and took it down as an entry in the Arts and Crafts in the evening when Tubby Han-is and I went out for tea. ENSA pictures - *Convoy* – followed by supper. Have had eggs for three days in succession in the cafes now. Easy church parade in the morning – CSM McKae seems better than the Fat Pig.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Blickland, another old schoolfriend. This was before he was captured at Tobruk, and spent the rest of the war as a P.O.W.

### *Monday*

Should be going up in the hills for four days sleep-out. However, snowing hard at reveille; change to rain just before breakfast, so doubtful whether we shall venture up. Wicked argument in the morning – hot and cold climate. The boys are getting well bagged up with the Icelandic climate. Spent the morning digging away the snow and slush from the transport lines in case it freezes up. Raining very hard all day and night. Tool inspection in the afternoon. Heard 1 won a second prize at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Got wet through in the evening whilst cleaning the river banks of snow and ice.

### *Tuesday 31st March*

Still raining hard in the morning. Late reveille owing to the fact that some of the boys were out late last night stopping the stream from invading the camp. General scrounge and painting motor bikes today. Went out to café with the two Tubbies in the afternoon, collecting 5 kronur prize money in route. Night convoy, intended for tonight, cancelled. Analysis of March weather: 2 days sunny, 3 bright, 2 very cold, 8 dull, 10 rain, 6 snow.

### *Wednesday 1st April*

Woke up to find the weather changed again-snow. About 8 inches outside. Snowed remainder of the day. Still painting motor-bike numbers. Got wet in the afternoon getting the water truck\* out. Went down to the cafe in the evening.

### *Thursday 2nd April*

Still snowing, though the night must have been pretty clear as the snow is not much deeper. Petrol-less day but not much work possible because of snow. Bath parade in the morning. On guard with Roy and Tubby Harris, Bill Bune and Jock.

\*No chains, yet PY has them to make journeys to the second jetty about ½ mile away, for the benefit of Wilmot; who turned back when truck blocked by snow.

### *Friday 3rd April*

Snowed intermittently all night and all day. Turning colder. The Icelanders seem to have come into their own and are indulging freely in winter sports, mainly skiing. Today is Good Friday. But you wouldn't notice it. 406 Inspection. George Wynn (our transport mechanic) took the piss horrible over a couple of loose nuts in the engine. Wanted to know how I managed to keep my engine in the truck. Tubby Harris also took the piss, but was subjected to the same thing himself when he had a 406 in the afternoon. Lecture before pay parade by Big Proctor, who told us about H Corp disaster in which three men "got their lot," i.e. froze to death on the glacier. Some of our blokes went down the Res for a dart match and came back pissed. Jock stopped Sam from whacking Wilson, the guard commander, and then went over and tried to whack him himself! Nearly landed up in the nick.

### *Saturday*

Snow in the morning, but cleared up later and the sun broke through. Very bright. Can understand now why the Icelandic general stores sell sunglasses. Scrounged in the afternoon-sat in the front of a truck, nattering with Roy and drawing a scene of the village. There is a lot of blue sky about now, but that is no indication of the weather. In England we curse the uncertain weather but England's got nothing on Iceland. Went out for a supper.

*Sunday*

Not on the voluntary church parade, as helping Ken with the water. His water truck has broken down, so he had a system of barrels on a 15-cwt truck. Stayed in, speculating on the events of the following few days, as, according to detail, we are due for 3 days in the hills.

*Monday, Easter Monday, 6th April and Tuesday*

### **Preparations for a Trek**

Spent the morning preparing Arctic Kit for the sleeping out, and cleaning guns for the maneuvers they propose to carry out. We, 5 Platoon, are acting as guinea pigs for various experiments to be made in the very sledge pulling, weight carrying, and so forth. Had to go to Ali Baba's Camp in the morning with the truck to collect a Godfrey sledge. Got as far as Minden, then got stuck in the deep soft snow. Luckily a R.A. truck pushed me the rest of the way and the same truck pulled me back. Started snowing about dinner time, good steady stuff. The ground is now covered with layer upon layer of snow of various ages, the bottom layer about a week old. In the afternoon, after a good dinner, we started off amid heavy snow on

### **Our Sledging Expedition.**

The platoon's complement was: 2 Greenland and 2 Godfrey Sledges, one for each sub-section, and each carrying a sub-sections kit up to two belt-boxes plus the tents; 1 Nansen 12-foot sledge with an rations and the remainder of the ammunition, together with odd tents, rucksacks, etc. This sledge to be pulled, pushed, or generally worked along by PHQ Tubby Harris and myself are two unfortunate members of DHQ and as there are only 5 other men and 2 NCOs the Nansen, weighing somewhere in the region of 500 lb. Should prove a pretty formidable burden. Each man is dressed the usual order for schemes of this nature, ie. (string vests, pullovers, long pants, wind-proof suits, frost-proof boots, two or three pairs of natural grease socks, and a pair of footless socks, fur hat, snow goggles, balacava, neckerchief, WORN); ruck sack containing the following: sleeping bag, inner half only, one blanket, one groundsheet, canvas trousers (for wearing at night), one mess tin, rations, several pairs of socks, bayonet, tommy cooker, 5 yards of string, scarf, eating irons, spare gloves (you wear as many gloves as possible), book, 40 rounds, outside the rucksack, rifle, skicum-snow shoes, spade, primus. An extensive list of kit like this seems to indicate that everyone is sufficiently equipped for any extremes of snow continuous, but believe me, you can never have enough clothes to put on when you camp out for the night, and everything is wet through with only a primus stove to dry on.

Resuming the account of the sledging trip, we started off from camp, following the telephone wire which leads to the permanent encampment in the hills, soon finding it heavy going, especially with the Nansen. However we plodded on, each section or subsection taking turns in helping others up. About 200 yds out of camp, I lost my bayonet, probably when handing over my rucksack to Harris R, who, in turn, handed over the Nansen harness to me. When we got to the steep ridge, progress was slowed down considerably by experiment, we found that the best way was to tie together all the ropes and harness available, get as far up the ridge as possible and then heaving, tug-o-war fashion. All this while, we had been following 6 Platoon, who had gone up before us, carrying the bare gun kit with no more than a couple of belts. They had gone over the top of the ridge until they could go no farther because of the deep snow. We hauled the Nansen up to the top of the ridge, where Pinks has a natter with Wilmot. The snow up here was not at all a steady fan; indeed it was practically a blizzard. I believe Pinks wanted to go back to camp, but Wilmot said we should pitch tents. Accordingly, we returned with the Nansen to the other sledges, parked just at the top of the sleep part of the ridge, and pitched tent. After getting the tent up, the best way to get the kit in is for one man to get inside and the other to hand it all in to him to straighten out. I, being the smaller, did this. Then collected rations-cocoa, sugar, oatmeal, biscuits, margarine, and paraffin for the

primus stove. Now all set to get into our sleeping bags and start cooking. We had some MOV and hot milk, economizing on the cocoa till tomorrow. Everything seems to be wet through, especially the wind-proof suits. They may be windproof, but they are certainly not waterproof. After kipping pretty well, we were awakened at 4 o'clock by Sam, who announces that his and Ernie Brooks' tent has been blown in on them. The gale has been increasing in intensity all night and the blizzard is blinding outside. Ernie Brooks came into our tent while Sam went into Tubby Martin's. The tents are only meant for two men, and then there's very little room, so that there in a tent is crushed to say the least. Anyway we packed together and kipped again, sardine fashion, till it got lighter. The way our tent was flapping about, it was surprising it didn't blow itself to shreds. There was a lot of talking going on outside, and eventually we heard "moving off in an hours time" with only personal kit. With three in a tent, getting up was a slow business. First Ernie got out with Tubby Harris's canvas trousers on as his own were filled with snow. He went back with a small party under Cpt. Bumpstead, which included Wilson and Cooper whose tent had also collapsed, Sam Briggs and Tubby Martin, who was rapidly approaching the state where you become a living icicle, deprived of movement. Tubby Harris and I gradually got our kit together, and got outside when the order was given. We then got in single file for a count up. Pinks, who had been rushing around an morning, found there were two missing, and then discovered Hardy and Ruddick still in their tent. This meant a further ten minute wait in the blizzard. When I first got outside. It took me about five minutes to get my breath. The wind took it right away. Eventually we started moving and marching in single file through deep snow we reaching camping in quite a short time. Were we glad to get some dry clothes on and a good cup of hot tea inside us! Find we are none the worse for our adventure, though Vie Eydmann has slightly frost bitten hands and Cpt Cooper is pretty bad. 6 Platoon who had to come down earlier than we did, one worse off. Charlie Ebers has frost bit badly, while Coope had to come back last night. He was delirious with exhaustion or something. We had a good dry out, then after dinner Pinks asked for volunteers to go and bring the kit down which we had left up there. From our room, there were Tubby Harris, Scoones, Sam Briggs, BiB Bumpstead, and myself; Wilson and Howells from next door, and of course Bill Bume. In addition, there was Capt Barton (mad as a hatter) and The Quarterboke with Gedge and Pink Gyett. The going was much easier and we arrived at the camp to find the wind died right down, though it was still snowing we got as much of the stuff from our camp in our empty rucksacks and on the big sledge as we could, then went to 6 Platoon where Capt Barton had gone off with Gedge and Pinky to get their gun kit, which he had packed on two sledges. After a lot of hard pulling, we got both platoons' gun kit, together with half our tents and equipment back to camp, about 6 o'clock. Another dry out and then, with the prospect of an easy day tomorrow, we went to the civvy pictures to see "Disputed Passage." Looking back on the experiences of the last two days, it seems obvious that sledge pulling cannot be successful on soft snow and on steep slopes as we get here, through they must be ideal on smooth, icy, snow.

### *Wednesday 8th April*

Still snowing hard, about two feet deep on the level ground. Trucks almost invisible, so are the engines inside, the snow having driven right inside. Easy day for yesterday afternoon's party. The other went up in the morning for the remainder of the kit, and went on a snow-shoe walk in the afternoon. Interesting lecture in the evening by Sgt. Maybury, RE, on streetfighting, etc. Supper in the evening. The snow has finally stopped, but there seems to be plenty more to come down.

#### *Thursday April 9th*

The snow has stopped and the sky has cleared up somewhat. On the trucks in the morning, clearing the snow off them. Mine started up ok, luckily. Bath Parade. Sgt Bune came in at dinnertime and announced quite casually that the platoon would be sleeping out in snow holes tonight. Accordingly we started energetically after dinner digging out our holes. 4 men to a hole, I was with Tubby Harris, Roy and Sam Briggs. We had difficulty as our site was where the snow was only about 5 feet deep; on a steep bank. The reputation snowhole, as far as we were concerned, therefore, was impracticable and so we had to make the best of things by digging laterally. Snow-hole digging is a very wet-business, and we had to change clothes. Our digging was very restricted as we either struck the ground or stuck the outside layer which shone green through the top.

We finished off after tea, when Bill Bune and Pinks came round inspecting the holes 10 judge whether they were safe enough. They came to ours and crawled in. Surprised? They were amazed! Apparently ours was the most unorthodox hole ever conceived and built in the history of snowholes. Admittingly that we had done our best in the circumstances (ie shallow snow) they both felt that the place was unsafe. Unanimously we argued the point, thinking all the time that we might have to dig another, and anyway we were looking forward to reaping the reward of our labours in the way of kip. Eventually Pinks washed his hands of the matter I said that we could sleep in it if we wanted to but that he couldn't take responsibility. Satisfied, we returned to the hut and canteen. Later on, Sam showed George Wyn round our burrow and noticed that the roof had sunk slightly. Tubby and I went up to verify the fact and brought the kits out. Sam reported to Bill Bune and that was the end of our sleeping out for the night. Jock Mailley's hole was also precarious, and so our roof was quite full for the night instead of being empty as we imagined at first. We are supposed to sleep out tomorrow night.

#### *Friday 10th April*

Digging snow. In the canteen at breaktime, saw Capt Barton and Bill Barratt preparing to trek to Eskefjodur to get the pay. In the afternoon, the platoon had a wicked hatter with Pinks who criticized our conduct on our night out in the blizzard. Got quite amusing towards the end. Pinks compared our snowhold with Piccadilly Tube! Missed pay parade in the evening as Barton was not yet back from Eski. Induced Sam, prejudiced as he was against Icelandic cafes, to come out for a supper. He was quite surprised at a passable egg and chip supper. Spotting with rain at night.

#### *Saturday 11th April*

Raining hard and the snow is now thawing into enonnous quantities of slush. The road is now composed of two parallel canals, the width of a truck. Spent most of the morning sorting out and checking all our Arctic Kit. Paid after break. Afternoon off. Tea at John's cafe, and then to Music Circle in YMCA. Quite a good programmer.

#### *Sunday 12th April*

Marvellous weather. Spent the morning lounging in glorious sunshine and writing a letter home. In the afternoon shambled down to cafe with Sam. Then went out with Roy for a supper. Expecting a boat in.

#### *Monday 13th April*

Big shake on as Major Wray is expected back. Camp being cleared of every square millimeter of foreign matter. Painting plates in the afternoon. On guard in the evening with Tubby Harris, Syd Duack, Bill Bune and Jack Mailley. "Esja" in with 5 bags of mail. Got a couple of letters and papers.

### *Tuesday 14th*

The "Esja" left at midnight. Painting in the morning. The "Locknager" is in, probably with mail. Rumours by the dozen are flying around. The most Important one is that F, G and HQ Corp. Have gone home and that the Americans are on their way to Seydisfjordur. The immediate deduction, therefore, is that the day of our departure to England is not far distant. A few blokes have arrived as a new draft from the 2nd Oriddx. They say that at Greenock, the leave party did not return to Iceland. Did some sunbathing in the afternoon after dinner!

### *Wednesday 15th April*

Painting all day, bridge signs on trucks. Another warm, sunny day. There have been numerous expeditions up the valley lately. 4 Platoon are sleeping up there, while smaller parties have been up every day.

Went to the concert in the evening. Very good, considering only chaps from the local mobs. Billy Weston very good, much better than I expected. Eggs in Veteingar.

### *Thursday*

All day on truck maintenance. Tightened all accessible nuts, etc. Treffgarne came round inspecting at 4 o'clock. Tubby Martin nicked for loose manifold nuts. Tubby Martin nicked for loosed manifold nuts. Tubby Harris and I looked for my bayonet in the evening but were unsuccessful. Went down to ENSA pictures hut couldn't get in full np so had another supper. Eggs again.

### *Friday 17th*

Picked RASC guard up at 7 o'clock. Convoy drive 10 Eski today. After a long spell of rubber boots, we are again wearing black boots. Drive to Eski in lovely weather but over terrible road surfaces. Started off by going along the estuary to the second jetty and getting water in the breakdrums. In most places the road consists of parallel ruts. Sometimes with rivulets down each one. Streams which normally trickle along the side of the road are now gushing in torrents straight across Eski looks a marvelous night in a spectacular seating viewed from the top of the Eski ridge. The fjord looks as blue as the Mediterranean. The sun now gets quite high in the heavens in the daytime; rises early and sets late-I doubt if we shall be here long enough to see the Midnight Sun on the near Moonlight Sun or whatever it is you see in the midsummer here. Had tea and cakes in the cafe at Eski, and made one or two quick sketches from the truck. Arrived back at camp just after dinner, and spent the afternoon doing maintenance. Took forms down to YMCA for pictures. Just going down myself when I was nabbed for a quarter blokes job-loading stores from the fuse jetty. Skid chairs (now the snow's gone) fur hats, ice-picks, tentpoles, ropes, etc etc, Went down the cafe. Woken at 1:30 to go out but Robbo, on guard, came to the rescue.

### *Saturday 18th*

Transport stoning but I was on various jobs. In the afternoon followed the football team down to the CD Camp in Harry Cardews trucks Harry had bad luck again-knocked his differential draining plug out on one of the big ruts. 1st XI drew with CO, 1-1 after a marvelous game. Ted Tyler played a binder. Hopper off on the way back and went in to Music Circle. Records, including "Barber of Seveille," Rosini, and Charlie Etherington on the piano. Met Roy and Tubby Harris and had a supper. In fact 2 suppers. Wicked anit-Roy natter on the subject of keenness on transport.

### *Sunday 19th*

Nothing on. Now certain that we shall sleep out tomorrow, weather permitting. Now a platoon roster-one week duty platoon, one week training in camp, and one week in the hills. Did some painting in the morning from sketches made at Eskifjordur. Played football for 2nd XI (plus Les Marr) against a mixed 1st and 2nd XI from 274 battery RA (Ali Baba's Camp). Very hard game, lost 2-1; of course the ref. was against us! A penalty from 16 yds. And with 4 blockes in the goalmouth. Our team was too astonished to protest! Lush kip in the afternoon. Another cafe supper in the evening. Every evening nowadays we have a nalter with Scoones, the newcomer to the room, on some subject or other. He seems to know everybody's trade, and dropped a what name the other day when he tried to ten Sam how to print! Heard another rum our tonight about Roya Tusihers coming. Are they coming to clear the place up? Today Sam and Jock came back from the hills and their course. They have been hard at it since. Thursday sledging, and camping, skiing and digging, reveille at 5 o'clock, and knocking off at 6 o'clock. They finished up each day dead beat. Good news-someone has found my bayonet up by the hospital. Shall probably collect it tomorrow.

### *Monday 10th*

Just after breakfast, there having been snow overnight. They decided to postpone our sleeping out for a day. Instead we spent the day at TOET, gas. Supper in the evening.

### *Tuesday 21st April 4 Days Sleeping Out*

Morning preparing kit. Dull day with bright intervals Rucksack weights 80-90 lbs. Contains (or has attached to) same as 6th April, except tent instead of primus, and leather jerkin. We came straight up to the permanent camp in three laps. Just about on our last legs when we finally arrived. Crane was practically on his knees. Employed on a new system (learning by experience) of pitching tents. First day at trench approximately 10"x34' and pitched 8 tents in it, overlapping. Collected rations and got into tents, where we had a good meal of M&V, Welsh Rarebit and Biscuits, and Cocoa. Now find that we have plenty of room in a 6'x4' tent. Rucksacks with all unnecessary kit-unused rations, gloves, etc.-outside, also rifles in tentbag and skis. While writing this, it is snowing slightly and of course, freezing, but is marvelously sheltered here in this trench. First night without event, except perhaps Frankie Pullen dropping his sock in his and Sam's tea.

### *Wednesday 22nd April*

A lovely day. Reveille at 7. On Parade for skiing at 9. Breakfast of oatmeal, corned beef, and tea. Quite a good morning skiing -section drill. In the afternoon went back to the ridge with Sam to try and find his watch. From 5- 7 dug weapon pits and did a bit more skiing. Have now just had supper of MOV and cocoa.

### *Thursday 23rd April*

Good night's kip. Went rock climbing in the morning - practice with ropes. Quite a bit of fun on the whole. In the afternoon sledging. On skis following the sledge while going uphill but on skis pulling coming back. You have to be careful when going down steep hills as the sledge catches you up. Chapman nearly lost his toe when he got in the way. Firing from the weapon pits in the evening, both with rifle and Bren gun. Usual supper and kip. Experimented with oatmeal cakes, which were found to be not only edible but also enjoyable; in plain English "lush". Our cooking by the way, is most peculiar, and is an extreme contrast with civilian cooking, camp cooking included. Mess tins are only washed out when absolutely necessary. Utensils are used on a pool basis, and are washed by sucking. All water is melted

down from icy snow. Dan Hardy, next door, succeeded in setting his tent alight to the extent of a scorched roof through leaving his primus stove unattended.

#### *Friday 24th April*

Last day of the 4 days' out. Spent all morning skiing under Norwegian Sgt. Holt. Altogether had the skis on continuously for 3 ½ hours. Mostly practice in cross-country walking, and pretty tiring. Break for dinner and then, leaving the skis behind for the next platoon, we marched off towards the camp. Again, only two breaks between the two camps, and we set a good speed, getting to the ridge in sight of Budareyri inside an hour. Arrived back at 3:30, and had the usual gradual transformation back to normality. Found my snow goggles still in the tent. A meal, pay parade, a supper (double chips) finished an energetic day. Two letters from Auntie Ruth and Ma.

#### *Saturday 25th April*

Back to the usual routine. On RASC job in the morning – loading petrol on to a small boat. John's cafe. Spent the afternoon stoning – one of Mad Barton's silly ideas. On a Saturday afternoon! Pretty warm work too. Supper in the evening. Gus Finch is getting his kit packed to go on leave. Two of our blokes are in dock hospital with snow-blindness.

#### *Sunday*

Routine as normal for Sunday, i.e. no parades. We have had no church parades for weeks now. Did a bit of painting and then went down the cafe' with Tubby Harris, Ken Mortimer, Roy, Mo Morris, and Mitchelmore. During the conversation, discussed the fine weather, and the idea came to us of walking to Eskifjordur. Found that the local 'bus would be leaving E. At 7 o'clock, so, armed with a camera and the necessary permission, Ken, Mitch, Tubby and I started off just before 2 o'clock. We got a lift for about a mile as far as the e.O. camp, but then proceeded in leisurely fashion along the now dusty road. Eski really does look lovely in the sunshine with its many coloured houses, several jetties, and the general scattered effect all round. We nearly entered the village preceded by a flock of sheep, but we had the inevitable tea and cakes, together with a wireless and a matey conversation with one of the women there. The people at Eski are much more friendly than at Budareyri, due, no doubt, to the fact that the troops are not there and have not yet been an unavoidable nuisance. The 'bus left at 7, pretty punctual, and we had a surprisingly comfortable trip back along the Burma-Road-like road, with fish as a small cargo in the back. The fishing season has apparently just begun. Saw a corvette which pulled in at the first jetty, but no merchant vessel with it. Supper in *Lochnagar* cafe.

#### *Monday 27th April*

The wind which blew all night has died down the once imminent rain has held off. Everyone on a peculiar B.R.C. hour's drill before breakfast. Held up for another hour because the officers weren't ready, and when we finally got going, nothing went right. Finished up by being dismissed with our bayonets still fixed! After breakfast accosted by Trefgame and put on driving instruction with Pinks. **Me on driving instruction.** A good scrounge anyway. Pulled Eli out of a ditch, took George Clatworthy for a short period and then got pulled by Roy out of the cookhouse drain myself. Out with Bill Bune, Pinks, and the Quarter-bloke in the afternoon. On guard in the evening. It must be months since I last blanch'd up. Tubby Harris dropped his rifle, but was let off by Pinks because the guards were smartly turned out. Queer to say the least. A good guard – Bill Bune is certainly the bloke to go on with. For some reason known only to himself he will insist that the sentries change ceremoniously during the evening. He didn't bargain for Syd Durack and Tubby Harris in combination,



however, and he saw some changing which, if ceremonious, were certainly not in the book. Evening's entertainment further enlightened by the sight of a sailor and a Canadian Sergt. being carried down to the corvette *Nimrod*, by Bill Platt and Ginger Law on a stretcher! Not through injury, just alcohol. *Lochnayar* in.

#### *Tuesday 28th April*

Driving instruction again. Out with Alf Parratt and Ted Drew, The latter, who has only driven once before, managed to drive into one of the narrow bridges on the Eski road, so the afternoon was spent watching George Wynn hammer and file the wing straight. We had an encounter with the KOYLI RSM in John's cafe. It was gas mask period and we had ours off as it was the Kensington's break time. We argued with him and got the better of the argument. George made a damn good job of his hammering, aided and abetted by Harry Cardew who nearly yanked the truck into the fjord whilst straightening out my front bumper bar. Usual supper in the evening.

#### *Wednesday 29th April*

##### **Drive to Eskifjordur.**

Getting quite used to the Eski road now. Bright and sunny day. Had Pinks with me. Convoy distances, etc., strictly observed. Took CSM to second jetty for ammo. In the afternoon and then did some maintenance underneath the truck. Football (compulsory) in the evening, and for once, did not go down to the village.

#### *Thursday 30th April*

Petrol-less day but detailed for a job-unloading the "Bug" at 8:30. Took off carts of wine, beer (30 tons) NAAFI stores, sledges, etc. Royal Fusiliers are doing the stevedoring as the R.F. dockers are doing 56 days a piece for having grub in their billet. Sam and the boys on loading party at NAAFI in the afternoon. Had to work until 9 o'clock in the evening. 4 Platoon out in rubber boats – nearly got drowned when one turned over in the middle of the fjord. Peachey got underneath a boat!

#### *Friday 1st May*

##### **Americans Take Over Iceland**

On BRC, told that the Americans have taken over control of Iceland. Off the road for maintenance. Did a bit of painting – Polar Bears (Divisional Sign) and name on truck *Muggsy*<sup>33</sup> lives again! Pinks in canvas under Tubby Martin's truck. Pay parade, also clothing exchange parades.

#### *Saturday 2nd May*

Maintenance, rations, and collecting the water truck occupied the morning. Football team beat CD Camp 3-0 in the afternoon. Canteen reserved for Kensingtons and C.D. in the evening and a wicked piss-up ensued. During the evening eight cases of beer consumed, only one fewer than the best Xmas day. Everybody in various stages of intoxication. Kemp's ambition to layout everybody in the company. Collis also pugnacious, but this was humorous. Went out myself to the cafe with Mitchelmore, and was one of the few sober drivers available to drive the C.O. chaps back to the C.D. Camp. Made two journeys, with a gloriously canned crew in the back each time, Sgt. Bumpstead's kit wrecked.

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<sup>33</sup> *My favorite jazz trumpeter*

### *Sunday 3rd May*

Easy routine, but day spoilt for me as I was duty driver. Water in the morning, and afternoon. Coaling with Tubby Harris. Did a spot of painting. Solo school has been going all day. Tubby pissed for the second night in succession. Rumours spreading like wildfire regarding future return to England. Brought four of Roy's records. Now have 77 local photographs taken by the chaps in our mob.

### *Monday*

Raining, thus breaking a long spell of fine weather. Did rations, and other odd journeys during the day. [and one to Minden Camp in the evening] Supper in the evening on Roy.

### *Tuesday*

My starter motor jammed so George Wynn spending half the morning taking it down while I pass out T.O.E.T. Bren and Tommy- Gun. Did a couple of journeys to second jetty- Lecture by Pinks in which we all had the usual natter. Brought the gramophone out and had a few records. Quite a change nowadays.

### *Wednesday, 6th May*

A thin layer of snow on the ground in the morning. Scale "A" parade at BRC in drill order, and gas equipment for about half an hour's silly company drill on the plateau. Doing all the 1914 style advance in close column of platoon drill, but with a mingling of the new drill, i.e. unfining bayonets in your own time. One section on the platoon on a stunt in the morning. Very enjoyable- went into action on the first ridge before the CD camp and also at C.D., then consolidated at Eski ridge. Pinks tried to make things realistic by "killing off" several men, and by having direct shell hits on trucks. Vic Eydman, whose truck was supposed to be hit, took command of my truck (Platoon Commander's) and left Pinks standing. Slight argument. Tabby Martin conks out on the ridge and returns with starter motor trouble, but Tubby Harris and I proceed further to Eskifjordur. The platoon hop in the cafe while Pinks goes shopping. We return in 32 minutes (11 miles) and of course Pinks brags about it in the Officers' Mess, and Clifford gives me and Tubby a good dressing down. 2nd Football XI beat KOYLI Mortor Platoon 4-1 in the afternoon. The big match, however, was in the evening when our 1st XI played the 1st XI "8" Caj., K.O.Y.L.1. The traditional enmity soon broke out when their supporters yelled, "Where's your machine guns!" There was not only a match between the two teams of supporters. They had the best of the game in the first half but we were an over them in the second, and scored two goals, thus winning a very hard contested game 2-0. The Kensington Supporters also won, the old wembley cheering technique being brought into action.

### *Thursday*

Petrol-less day so a day's maintenance, finishing up with an inspection at 4 o'clock. Bath Parade in the morning. Did some more painting in the evening and then went out for a supper.

### *Friday*

Much ads in and out of camp today-two boats due in, The first, the *Nova* arrives early with some mail, and also all the chaps who left the last week in January to go boxing at Reijkjavik. Quite a reunion. Joe Mallen and Joe Tarbuck both back in the room. Quite a squeeze now as Bill Barratt came in here out of the office the other day. There are now 14 of us in the room. The only mail I had was my gramophone spring back from H.M.V. The *Esja* draws in its usual hell-for-leather pace, skids to a stop off the first jetty, and is out again down the fjord directly after dinner. Watched the first XI play 274 Battery, R.A. Another thrilling game like

Wednesday. Feelings again ran high between the two supporting crowds. They had most of the play in the first half and scored two goals. Then we started pressing in the second half and Les MalT scored with a marvelous drive from a free kick 40 or 50 yards out. There was no stopping us then, but we just couldn't get another goal, and the final Score was 2-1 against. Pay parade and supper finished off the day.

*Saturday 9th May*

### **Long Route March**

Glorious weather still prevailing, we are excused BRC and get ready for a route march. It is to be an all-day affair and we are carrying 10 belts per gun. All the gun kit is being carried either on Everest carriers or in rucksacks.

(written next day):- On November 27th, Major Wray had his epic. Yesterday, Capt. Barton had his, and it knocked Wray's into a cocked hat. The other day, we were told of a plan for machine gunners to keep up with infantry and so yesterday it was put to the test. All the loads were roughly 50 lb. I myself had two belt boxes, rifle, bayonet, mess tins and odds and ends, in a nicksack. We marched up the Egilstadir road, until just before Ali Baba's Camp, then turned off the road to the left. It is pretty hot, with brilliant sunshine, and the packs are heavy considering the pace, which is normal route march pace. We struck to the extreme left hand valley, crossing streams en route. The deepest one was crossed as follows: boots and socks off, boots and socks in hand, cross stream, dry feet, empty boots of water, socks and boots on. Water icy cold, but marvelously refreshing to the feet. We started a slow ascent, where we started to muck about with the guns, giving flanking fire, etc. Someone condescended to tell us what we were doing when we left camp, but we didn't even know which directions we were taking! Apparently the idea is to ascend the vajley and theoretically to attack the village of Budir in the next fjord. Nobody seemed to trouble about the fact that the vaHey up which we were progressing was the wrong one and that it petered out after a couple of miles. We had an hour's break for dinner, about 6 miles from camp, until 1:30. Dinners were ordered for 5 o'clock, so that if we started straight back, we should just about do it. However, our hopes were dashed abruptly to the ground when Pinks announced that, the tactical side of the scheme having been abandoned, we would continue marching, our next objective being the top of a waterfall which we could see about 800 feet straight above us up a slope of about 35 degrees. This doesn't sound much, but it's a different matter when you stare such a slope in the face. Having reached this waterfall we thought that we must turn back now, but no, our next move was straight up again. The waterfall was above the snow-line and all we could see for our future route was ridge after ridge of smooth unbroken snow. We plodded on. Barton well to the fore, finding the route. We finally reached the summit on a sort of sub-plateau, at an altitude of about 3,000 feet, incidentally the highest I've ever been in my life. We advanced along this plateau. Down to the left, 3/5 of a mile below, and about 3 miles away, we could see the camp between a gap in the ridge of mountain escarpment which lay between us and the fjord. Far to the left could be seen the Lagafejot, 25 miles away, and mountains beyond. Behind us, through another gap, the lava plains (desert) of the central part of Iceland. We eventually reached a point right at the top of the bowl directly opposite our camp and looked down the fjord beyond Eskifjordir: The snow a mile each side of this point was very soft, and it was hard going wading through up to your knees. At long last we started to descend, half walking, half sliding. 4 Platoon left us and we continued with their cast offs, and Capt. Barton who had apparently rested and waited for the last column. Down past the snow line and finally to the shore of the fjord, a welcome change to be walking on level ground. The first small stream we came to Pinks came the old acid\* and tried to have the boot business all over again. Capt. Barton disagreed, however, so Pinks went into a sulk. We found later he was on his last legs – he had carried people's loads for quite a way. Pinks, for all his

short-comings as to his manners, and the art of using his loaf, certainly has got what it takes when it comes to guts. Not like the other ersatz subalterns we have here. Wilmot, as Bill Barralt tersely put it, only carried a mess tin and a *Readers Digest*. Anyway, the motto now was "shit or bust," and Barton led us through streams without deviation, sometimes up to our thighs in water. Luckily, on the football pitch, there were trucks to take the loads, and so we did the final few hundred yards into camp in three columns, in three feet of water, straight across the fjord. Time now 8:15. Bags of grub, rum issue, and kip.

#### *Sunday 10th May*

Late reveille'. Church parade still on. Everyone well gimped, and showing little sign of yesterday's march. Fine weather again. No inspection, and no unnecessary bawling by NCOs, etc. Tea and cakes just before dinner. Went out again for tea and had an early night.

#### *Monday 11th May*

5 Platoon on training in the region of the C.D. Camp. Battle Drill in the morning, O.P.D.I. in the afternoon. Had halfhour break in C.D. canteen in the morning. Supper with Roy in the evening.

#### *Tuesday 12th May*

After a general talk by Pinks, we went out on a scheme to Eskitjordur. Went straight there and had tea and cakes in the cafe while Pinks bought stockings or something. Then a spot of P.D.I. on Eski Ridge and return to camp. Knocked around the transport lines in the afternoon. Supper in evening as usual.

#### *Wednesday*

##### **Comradeship Crisis**

Painting Polar Bears on trucks. Then Bath parade. A crisis developed at dinnertime. Pinks decided that 5 Platoon were to swap over their rooms so that we are divided into sections. Never have I heard such a general moan. Not a single person wanted to move. Everyone suddenly realized how much it meant to keep to his own particular few square yards and to be amongst the same chaps as he had been among for the past 6-1/2 months. Went and nattered with Pinks directly after dinner and he said he would reconsider the matter. If we heard nothing by 2 o'clock we were to carry on with the change. Tense atmosphere then prevailed during the hour before 2. Every foot-step saw members of the room looking up expectantly. Roy monotonously gave us the 15, 10, and 5 minutes-to-go time signal. Then, a 1st minute reprieve. Bill Bune comes in, tells up to be in Cooper's Hut at 2 o'clock. We go the room. The excitement is terrific. We await Pinks. He enters. He speaks. He decides against the change. Sighs of relief. Faces change from gloom to elation. We are saved. In the afternoon we have interior economy for the Company Commander's Inspection tomorrow. The real thing this time – every article of kit outside and the floor scrubbed white (at least nearly white).

#### *Thursday 14th*

Day started with the siren sounding before reveille for an alamo Rumour of a Gennan plane over – this is an air raid. Turn out as usual and I am detailed for anti-tank rifle with Harris R. We get out to the AT position and are left there for half an hour. Scoone, fetches us, announcing that the rest have been back some time. Wicked moan. Maintenance for the rest of the day. Inspection at 3 o'clock. I.Co's room inspection at 5. Room looks really good and nobody was nicked though Wilmot blew dust off Sam's shelf. Spotted with snow during the day – there was a frost last night. Another supper, but this time cheese and biscuits in the billet! Started a letter home. Had some mail this morning from home, John Walke\* and Buck.

\*Friend from pre-war days, who shared “digs” in west London.

*Friday 15th May*

### **Sanitary Improvization**

Have to go on drill parade at 8:30! Drivers on drill! Working up on “Boot Hill” all the rest of the day, digging gun pits and practicing relieving by night. Pay parade. Tubby Han-is and Joe Tarbuck pinching coal from the prohibited dump when Barton turns up. Instead of nicking, all he says is “take it from the back of the dump instead of where the trucks come in.” A similar incident occurred some time ago. The Quarter-bloke had taken the mikie out of Lambert, the duty sanitary man, by recommending (as a substitute for Jeyes Fluid) three ascorbic tablets in a bucket of water. He related the incident to Barton who, instead of laughing as the Q.M. expected, just said “Well, if we haven’t got the right stuff we must improvise.”

\*Take the Mickie...in this case, playing a practical joke.

*Saturday*

Without any previous scheming, tearing, or fiddling, went to the Q.M. and exchanged my suit of canvas and also my old battle-dress. Quite a surprise considering I have been trying for months now. Football match in the afternoon, 5 Platoon v. C.H.Q They were quite funny with Cpt Clifford in goal, and Jack Butterworth and Mo Martin as the right wing. We won 7 –0. Marched around in the evening. Rum issue resulting in half our room under the influence, especially Joe Tarbuck.

*Sunday*

There is now a big shake on – possible Gennan Invasion of Iceland. We should catch it pretty hot here as we are on that part of the coast nearest Norway. A duty platoon stands by and sleeps fully dressed. 5 Platoon, being the duty (fatigues, guards) platoon, miss it this week. We have to mount our guns up the hill in the event of an alarm while the drivers get ammo. loaded on the trucks. Did some painting in the morning – Icelandic scene at night. Duty driver but no journeys to do. We have now 24 hours light. Finished letter home. Raining all day.

*Monday*

Did Dan Hardy’s sanitary fatigue. Also swill entailing free tea and cakes in the Veitingar. In the late afternoon told to get a cover on the back of my truck as I was to collect Major Wray late in the evening. Unjammed starter motor. Hung around all evening but no boat in apart from a couple of “winkle barges.” Rain all day with heavy fog down the fjord. Told at 11:30 that I could go to bed.

*Tuesday*

Woken at 5:30 to go down with Barton for Wray. Got down there and had to cart all Wray’s kit over the winklebarge from his boat to my truck. The whole camp, especially the officers, shaking. All the officers on BRC! Batmen running around in small circles – couldn’t get his kit off quick enough. Batmen are commonly known to be a pretty low type but I have never seen such a servile crew as ours. Detailed for RASC job in the morning but cancelled, so spent the day scrounging. Wray caught a crowd of us in the transport hut but luckily he was in a good mood and made a joke of the fact that everyone seemed to be having a break when he called round the rooms! As we had feared, the RASC job is for 6:30 – another late night. Nevertheless managed to get in the Veitingar.

### *Wednesday 20th May*

Small boat in. Scrounged in the morning, kipped in the afternoon, on guard in the evening. Easy and uneventful guard. Could see to read during the 11-1 shift! Listened to wireless in sergeant's mess – Benny Goodman, and made tea.

### *Thursday*

The big shake for the American General, due in this weekend has started. Everyone is turving round the huts – O.K. but why wash the stone – words fail me. The words “Hyde Park Camp” is being done in stones (whitewashed) in front of the Coy. Office. The guardroom is being engulfed by all manner of wire, rope, pickets, posts, stones, and Christ knows what. What the hell they'd do if the King came round is absolutely beyond speculation. Went skiing in the afternoon. Harry Cardew took us up to a point up the Seydisfjordur road. We got off and climbed (nearly creased me) up the right hand slope until we were among the snow. The Norwegian took us round a bit, walking and so on, but we had about an hour's free skiing. Somewhat marred as far as I was concerned by doing a forward roll at about 20 m.p.h., leaving my sticks behind me. Pretty tired when we got back. Had to work again, this time painting a couple of signs – “Military Camp – 10 mph”

### *Friday 22nd May*

#### **Hail to the General**

Working spasmodically during the day either on the truck or in the room, which is being whitewashed through. The big shake increases in intensity. So does the rain. General now due in tonight. Pinks and Co., on a Commando Course, are well bagged up. On filthy conditions, they are doing all sorts of stunts, Commando fashion. After tea and pay parade, we see a boat, new to us, come in with either a corvette or destroyer escorting. Rumour after rumour flies round the camp. Later on, another boat with another escort. The General is here.

### *Saturday*

General's inspection sometime today so we carry on gimping the camp up. Early reveille. The place looks like a workhouse with all this whitewash around. We are regarded with disdain by other mobs in Budareyri. Clothing parade just before dinner. Nearly everybody checked for minute greasespots by Major Wray. One day some of these officers who have nothing to do all day except find fault, will wake up to the fact that there's a war on. All morning we couldn't go in our own room for fear of soiling the flooring. British Army after 2 ½ years of “Total War.” My God! During the morning about 60 American troops come off the *Lochnagar* and go up to Ali Baba's Camp. At last we see some signs of a change over from British to American, with the consequent possibility of us going home. At dinnertime the Great Man came round, looked round the camp for approximately 45 seconds and carried on his way. Nothing on in the afternoon – somebody must have slipped up somewhere – so had tea and cakes down John's with Roy Erine Brooks gave an exhibition of driving – mountain driving by the look of it. Supper in the evening. Everybody in just about as browned off as it is possible to be. There is a scale “A” parade in the morning – highly equipped Drill Parade. Tubby Harris back from C.D. Joe Mallen slung in his lance-corporal's stripe. \*

### *Sunday 24th May*

Working day today as we have a day off tomorrow for the Gymkhana at the C.D. Camp. Drill Parade off. It has been raining all night and starts again just after breakfast. We are saved! We stand by for the rain to stop but it is finally cancelled in favour of work on camp. Have to go out with my truck with some blokes to get a load of stones. After one journey everyone is wet through by the downpour so we jag in for the day. In the afternoon every me spark out.

Loaded trucks after tea- we are operational platoon and have to sleep in our clothes tonight. Sing Song in the Canteen. Major Dray says we have three weeIG.o a month left in Iceland. Free day tomorrow.

#### *Monday 25th*

No Reveille' – atmosphere of sheer bliss and happiness prevailed. We got up when cookhouse blew, had breakfast and then divided into two parties. (a) Solo School, which carries on in this room now at all odd moments during the day. (b) Kippers- i.e. They who kip. With the gramophone going, books to read, cards to play, beds to luxuriate in, and no fear of being nabbed for a job, everyone is perfectly content. One of the best mornings I personally have ever spent. More kip with tea and cakes in the afternoon. In the evening worked solidly at a map I am drawing of approximately 25 miles radius of this village.

#### *Tuesday 26th*

On another painting job- stripes, pipe, and whatnot on gas capes. Also continued map. Supper in the evening. Rumour cripes rumour at the rate of about three per hour nowadays. Liason with RASC Sergt. in cafe' who knows, but will not tell. Query- does this signify an early departure. Stanyer poked his nose into canteen tonight and found the "slate" list. Nattered Worland who outnattered him. Incidentally, there are 98 men on the slate this week! Last week the total was 400 kronur. Has been raining with bright intervals for the past couple of days.

#### *Wednesday 27th*

Maintenance all morning for OME inspection which took place uneventfully in the afternoon. Did nothing in the evening except read and write.

#### *Thursday 28th*

Supposed to be going out for an R.A. Demonstration but bad visibility effected a cancellation. Spent half the morning changing clothes, as various parades were ordered and then cancelled two minutes before they were due to start. Spent rest of the day stoning while most of the company played nigger. Supper in the evening. Sleeping bags were withdrawn at dinnertime, so that tonight we have to improvise in the old style with blankets.

#### *Friday 29th May*

Everyone wakes up moaning because of a bad night's sleep with their 4 blankets Route March under Major Wray. Dress-wind proofs, safety margins in nicksack. Set off at puRoya waterparch pace in three ranks and then turned off part the Norwegian Camp. Kept up a good speed directly up the hill until we got to the first ridge. Then waited while Major Wray cut steps in a steep snow slope. Ascended, thus being on top of the ridge, bore right for about \_ mile and had lunch in the shelter of a gully. The day is quite fine but spoiled by a chilly wind blowing round the comer from Happy Valley. Wray decided against ascending any farther and we came down another snow slope some way from the first. Arrived back feeling quite fit. Pay parade in the evening followed by a supper.

#### *Saturday*

Kit inspection in the morning. Usual disorganization at first. Finally got the layout decided. 5 Platoon, having been warned by Pinks not to wash white socks, all have to show socks clean on guard mounting tomorrow. Kip in the afternoon.

### *Sunday 31st May*

Free Day. Sam, having organized the previous night rounds up Bill Barratt and myself for an expedition mountain climbing, the object being to reach the summit of the mountain we climbed on Friday. The weather was not too good, but we finally set off. Ascended the same way as Friday, making good time, and then to the 'chimney' a deep gully which apparently let straight up to the summit. Snow beginning to blow about a bit now. Gradually got higher, climbing up the snow which lay in the gully. This became treacherous, as we went high, and this fact, combined with (a) uncertain weather, and (b) increased gradient, led us to abandon the attempt approximately \* 400 feet from the top. Came down in the approved fashion three on a rope, bowlines and whatnot. Bill Barratt slid down the slope up which Major Wray made steps, and arrived at the bottom quite safe and sound.

\* Hard to judge, 400 feet being maximum guess. Probably 250' or 300.'

I had a shake up on the way up when I slipped on icy snow whilst negotiating the steep snow in the gully. Luckily got on to soft snow and stopped before I got speed up.) A leisurely trip back to camp where we were nattered honibly on the question as to whether we were only 3 parts or totally mad. Apparently half the company had been watching our progress through glasses. Showed socks clean and went out as usual in the evening. Bought a couple more of Roy's records.

### *Monday June 1st*

Went down to the RE's to get some paint, but returned with a lump of wood to repair my bed. Paint was for repainting the cross of a Canadian Corporal up on Rool Hill. The "Zaanshiom" came in today and in spite of rumour, the R.E.'s did not embark, and American troops did not disembark. Mail in, but not for me.

### *Tuesday*

On a stunt- watching a Demonstration by the R.A. Trucks took us up to Ali Baba's Camp and we spent the morning sitting on a hillside watching 25- pounders fire. Later on we marched, or, rather, shambled a couple of miles across the valley to the O.P., where we watched the effect of the fire. Marched back, with Major Wray leading. Already well browned off with walking through streams, we were doubly browned off by the pace he set. About 5 m.p.h. over rough country. Most of us had to double part of the way to keep up, and because we did not keep step, we were called a "rabble." Arrived at the road and instead of crossing a stream by the bridge, we crossed it in the usual fashion- forging it. Got back and recuperated in the usual fashion- supper. Wicked natters by Pinks about the rifles of the transport. Afterwards discovered that Pinks had to clean Barratt's rifle which he used on the assault course.

### *Wednesday*

Painted the cross in the morning, and cleaned up the truck a bit in the afternoon. In the evening had to show our white kit bags scrubbed to Bill Bune.

### *Thursday 4th June*

Demonstration of MG firing by us to the R.A. 5 Platoon left camp just before 10 o'clock and drove 12 miles up the Egilsstadir Road. Here we mucked about a bit while 4 Platoon did their stuff. Then our "reccy" party went up and I parked my truck next to the CHQ trucks which were the umpires' trucks. While I laid down and drummed up with George Wynn and Ken Mortimer, the Platoon came up (very well incidentally) and got going. Pinks made a bad mistake with the switch (this is a T.O.G. shoot and the O.P. is some way from the guns) and



so the guns were a long time getting off the mark. After the shoot was over, we fired rifles, Anti-tank. Etc. Gregg, our senior section commander came in for a lot of criticism, but on the whole the shoot came off pretty well. Bags of fun and games on the gun line, apparently with Sam Briggs' gun and condenser came boiling over. Got back pretty late and went to ENSA cinema show-“Destry Rides Again.“

#### *Friday*

Went sick for dental treatment – yesterday knocked some filling out of my teeth whilst gnawing a chop – we cooked our dinner in mess tins over tommy – cookers. Got back and promptly had an hours' break until 11 :30 when we went on parade for M.G. under Gregg. Rifles inspected by Pinks who seems to be chasing the drivers one day and praising them the next. Lecture in the afternoon by Major Wray on the previous day's shoot. This lecture was more like a stage turn than anything. Every time he criticized anything or anybody, two or three people got up and delivered a knitter. Alf Farrah, knattered for sleeping at the side of the road, got up and told Pinks and Wray where they got off. All the section commander and corporals put the blame on each other. Ken Mortimer who had been buttmarking with cit and let the cat out of the bag when he said that they had “knocked a few tins over to make a show for the KOYLLs. This was for 4 Platoon so really 5 Platoon were the only ones to lay fire on the target, and they only got 8 shots on. Wray got some cheap publicity when he had pay parade at 3:45 instead of 6 o'clock. Bought some stockings for Ma at the COOP, and had a supper.

#### *Saturday 6th June*

Third day of our sweep. In our room each man has drawn two dates from 4th to 28th of June as dates when we go home. There is a kromir apiece on it. Route march cancelled so platoons on M.G. instead. George Wynn did my tappets and after break had a Pinks lecture in the afternoon 5 Platoon just beat C.A.Q. 4-3 at football.

#### *Sunday*

Free day. Kipped in the morning, and in the afternoon had tea and cakes in F.2. Cafe. Weather had been very dull lately but is now turning for the better. Uneventful day on the whole.

#### *Monday 8th June*

Woken early in the morning at 12:30. Broad daylight when the fall in goes and we go grumbling out on the parade in windproofs and nicksacks. Apparently the idea is that parachutists have landed on CD. ridge and we are to do a spot of infantry work. We do a cross country hike and mess about a bit and then march back arriving at about 4 o'clock. Reveille' is at any time providing you are in to breakfast at 10 o'clock. Lush. On a job getting coal for the Norwegians during the morning. Spent some time watching a pilot of theirs stunting with a Northrop. He is 50 years old and has wooden leg. Just scrounged in the afternoon and went down for tea and cakes with Joe Mallen. Issued today with socks, pullover, snow suit, gloves, moccasin leather gloves, woolen hat, and mittens. Chi lucky- no kit bag for me. All the company skis, sledges, etc. Have been withdrawn. No wonder- it seldom freezes nowadays. Today had been a day of brilliant sunshine. We saw the sun rising on the mountain tops across the fjord whilst marching back from the C.O. this morning at 3 o'clock, and it is still shining tonight at lights out on those same mountain tops.

#### *Tuesday 9th June*

Fine day. On odd jobs all day with the truck. Got Tom Newitt out of the stream across the fjord with a crowd of blokes and Harry Cardew's truck. Company on a mortar demonstration

in the afternoon. Our blokes apparently nearly as good as the KOYLI's The "Lochnagar" is in but there is nothing on it, even mail. By the way the move seems to be off for a little while. Wray says its due to rumours. Took Treffgaine down to the boat. Wrote home.

### *Wednesday*

Working for the Americans all day today with my truck. Did numerous journeys backwards and forward from the new camp they are building on the way to the C.D. Camp.

### *Thursday 11th June*

On a scheme all day on the EgiIsstadir Road. Indirect and direct fire. Trucks hung about for most of the time. Barton, now transport officer, celebrates by getting Tubby Harris and me stuck. He changed my parking position and promptly got me down to my ankles in thick mud and stones. Eventually towed out, but not before my tyre valve is snapped off. The only tyre not of the "run flat" type, too. He sent back for another Bedford tyre to put on temporarily, but I shall be off the road tomorrow. The short without event, except Fries' fall in the river, and being taken back to camp clad in a mackintosh. All the 5 Platoon trucks were stuck simultaneously at one time. Got back pretty late and had dinner. P.S. Joe Mallen nearly broke his neck trying to stop a curvy truck and taking a spill.

### *Friday 12th June*

Doing my tyre in the morning. Turns out to be a "run flat" after all. Hell of a job changing the inner tube. Also a 406 Inspection on the truck. Commissioned for another couple of signs- "15 km.p.h. Bit of fun in the afternoon. The company having their photograph. Pay parade. In the evening, a lecture by Major Wray on yesterday's scheme. High spot of the evening provided by cpt Cooper who stood up and complained about the bad rations provided for the men, he remarked that the officers were brewing tea most of the time, and added insult to injury by saying that the previous Company Commander never did such a thing! This put Wray in a raging temper, obviously arising from a guilty conscience upon the matter. Afterwards went out for a quick supper and pictures- "Pinocchio." A lovely day today.

### *Saturday*

"Esja" in. Out again at 10:30. Quick work. On the water truck in the morning. Cushy. A sack of mail in but got none. Played football in the afternoon. 5 Platoon lost dismally to 4 Platoon 6-1. Good spell of weather now. About time too. Wrote home.

### *Sunday*

A church parade but as only tall blokes on it, missed it, doing some slight fatigue work instead. This afternoon an the officers and sergeants are going to Eskifjadur, on a pleasure trip, in two trucks. And they lecture a driver something horrible if he wastes half a pint going down to John's Cafe. Wrote to Buck.

### *Monday*

Drivers on parade now. Odd parades- grenade throwing etc. Went to pictures- "New Moon."

### *Tuesday*

Platoon scheme in the morning. Long carry over the rough country on the way to the ridge above Minden Camp. Hottest day this year. Must have been about 65 -70 degrees. Joe MaBen and I carried cocoa, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Wandering about at our ease. The others did a lot of crawling which ain't so good on a day like this. We had some difficulty crossing a fast torrent - the one leading down to Minden, and I slipped in on my side, but instead of being

unpleasant, it was just the reverse. In the afternoon, detailed for painting all sorts of signs on the trucks. 44's one being replaced by the old 53 's. Evening. Write letters- John Walke  
Meanwhile the rest of the room is peace and quiet, apart from Roy washing, and dropping razor blades down his trousers. Tubby Harris is drumming up. Peace, perfect peace.

#### *Wednesday 17th June*

Went down the R.E.'s and painted some odd boxes and things for sundry Colonels. In the afternoon, Tubby Martin started on painting the red plates. Went out for a supper with Joe Mallen. Wicked knatter on aeroplanes with Scoones.

#### *Thursday*

A convoy drive to the Laganfjöl. All the company with gun kit on board, but as far as they were concerned they might just as well have been on a Sunday School outing. Every available truck out. Journey uneventful. Turned left at Egilsstaðir and skirted the lake until we arrived somewhere in the region of Hallormstadir, approximately 38 miles by wad from Budareyri. Played at soldiers for half an hour and had dinners cooked on field kitchens. Arrived back at 6:30 and went out for supper. Attrill in my truck, spent most of the time knattering. ( See map next page) "Lochmagar" in with mail. Letters and papers for me.

#### *Friday 19th June*

Truckless day. Cheeseman cleaning my truck up as I am on the painting job. Orders about plates cancelled as plates are being salvaged. Have to paint. 53 's on the wing. Dicked knitter with Clifford. Mucked about in the afternoon, picked up dogends in the transport lines. In the evening went for a walk with George, Mick, Joe, and Tubby Harris. Messed about in general. I distinguished myself by jumping into a muddy stream whilst attempting to jump across. The others seemed to find this amusing. Sam Briggs and a small party of cronies tried to build a raft with odd bits of wood and petrol-tins. Needless to say, the raft was not a success.

#### *Saturday*

Sam is going stme bonkers. He went for a swim in the fjord at reveille'! Still painting signs. Went for a swim in the afternoon. George, Tubby, Mick, and I followed the Budis River past the Norwegian Camp, up alongside a marvelous series of gorges until we came to the waterfall. Did a bit of rockclimbing up above the fall and then a quick dip in an ice cold basin, followed by some sunbathing in the nude. Tea and cakes and back to billets. Big march to Nordfjordur tomorrow. Wrote to Auntie Ruth.

#### *Sunday 21st June*

##### **Epic to Nordfjordur.**

See Map

Late reveille' bugt on trucks at 9 o'clock in route to Eskifjordur. A lot of sea mist about but marvelous weather when we reached a point about 2 miles past Eski at about 10:30. Got off truck and after a short rest, started to climb In file. As a guide, we had the telephone line to Nordfjordur to follow. Climbed straight up until at about 1000 feet struck a vague undefined path, marked on the map in a thick heavy line as a 'bridle path.' This disappeared at various intervals in snow which was still lying about in places. We made our second halt just below the ridge which must have been very grueling, the height being attained in a horizontal distance of only about two miles. Just over the top of the ridge we could see the village of Neskaupstadur shining white in the distance, and as soon as we struck clear water we halted for lunch. The weather was glorious. I must have lost pounds coming up the hill. Whilst eating we sunbathed. The going was much easier now, the gradient being less acute. Everyone

was in good spirits, and as a contrast to the morose silence as we climbed up, everybody chatted, sung, or generally knattered. We passed a marvelous waterfall, and then crossed a river by the simple expedient of walking through it up to our knees. Another slight ridge and we had another, larger river to cross. This time above our knees but we didn't worry about little things like that. We got on to the road and marched in step (almost) in sections. Several civilians about, some on bikes, and some seemed to go back to the village to warn the populace. After the last halt we got into threes in the approved fashion. This was pretty good in my opinion. We had carried machine gun kits the whole distance as well as safety margins. The average load was close on 50 lbs. Neskaupstadur is a big fishing village, almost a town. There must be about 30 jetties. There are shops, a small cinema, and a British Vice-Consulate. In the middle of the village, there were the cookhouse staff waiting for us with vast quantities of steaming hot tea. We got on the "larchy" at 7 O'clock and were away twenty minutes later. The boat journey was pretty boring. Most of the chaps were cold, though Joe Mallen, Jock Muilley and I were O.K. on the grating above the stokehole. We got back to the long jetty at midnight and were soon getting outside a good dinner. Drifted off to kip about half past one.

### *Monday 22nd June*

Free day. Breakfast at 9 o'clock, no reveille'. Went out for tea and cakes in the morning, walk in the afternoon- tried a bit of painting up the gorge. In the evening went to see a very good film-"Arise My Love" with Claudette Colbert and Ray Millance.

### *Tuesday 23rd June*

Spent all day diligently painting various signs on the trucks. A lecture at 6 O'clock by Major Wray. Preliminary knatter about the Neskaupstadur march and the sports to be held on Saturday. Then the momentum sentence- "we are moving." The scheme is for 'E' Coy and 'H' Coy, who are at Akureyri, to change over. Wray is trying to arrange for us to move by road, but I DON'T THINK IT IS PRACTICAL. We have to wait for boats next week. Akureyri is the second town of Iceland with a population of over 5,000, a cathedral, cinema, and a shopping centre. 'H' Coy's Camp is 4 mile out of town. They are allowed out once in about 4 days, and the place is full of M.P.'s. Also there is a good parade ground. Much speculation after the lecture. It seems very fishy. We are being part on trust not to talk about it in the village to other units. Wray says it will be a good test of one 'security-mindedness'. Yet he admits that it won't matter much if we do talk. Immediate inference- are we meant to talk? Is this Akureyri that just a blind to put us off the scent of a puRoya move to England? In the evening did some private interior economy. Did some washing, socks, and pyjamas, some mending, and some blancoing up for tomorrow's drill parade. All the evening we talked about the coming move. There are so many reasons why we shouldn't move to Akureyri:-

- (a) We are due to move to England soon now., Therefore it's a bit late to start inter moving in Iceland.
- (b) Wray seems to have told us a hell of a lot.
- (c) Shipping space is very valuable. Ships have been taken off the Icelandic Route for elsewhere.
- (d) The KOYLI's, whom, Wray says, are moving with us, know nothing about it.
- (e) All the kit in the company seems to have been scrupulously marked, rather unnecessary for a move such as this.
- (f) Officers and Sergeants still seem to be buying kit, yet there are better shops in Akureyri.
- (g) Why only Kensingtons and KOYLI's, and why both move at once?
- (h) Three blokes still on leave in England, who went on April 22nd.

- (i) A leave party is due soon and yet there is no talk about it yet. The RA's know who their leave party is.
- (j) Platoon markings have been put on trucks, though it's not certain that our transport is going. Two reasons why we should move:-
  - (a) Wray says so.
  - (b) It's just like the army.

### *Wednesday*

Wrote to Grandma. Drill parade and P.T. in the morning. P.T. very good – took towels with us and went straight across streams bare footed. Most of the blokes did a spot of swimming in a fast running stream. Tubby Harris lost his glasses. Painting in afternoon. Showed rifle clean to Bill Bune for second time running. Bill Bune is worse than Pinks on rifle inspection. In the evening for 2 1/2 hours (that bastard CRM) worked off a fatigue received on orders this morning for a dirty bed cot. I say 'worked' but could have done the lot in 10 minutes, bashing tins.

### *Thursday 25th June*

Spent the morning doing some maintenance on the truck and the afternoon painting. Supper in the evening. Wrote to Auntie Ethel.

### *Friday*

Interior Economy followed by a kit inspection by Capt. Barton. Passed off with out a hitch. Did some training in the afternoon for the sports tomorrow. After pay parade, got our photographs, and went to pictures. "The Saint at Palm Springs." Supper.

### *Saturday*

Free day for sports. Got up at breakfast bugle. (it seems pretty definite now that we are going to Tekureyri, in spite of all the reasons tabulated on Tuesday) A few events run off in the morning, but main events in the afternoon. Sports on the whole quite good, but unfortunately cut short by rain at tea time. Ran in the 3-mile myself, and wished I hadn't after the first lap. Cheeseman won all track events up to 440. Bill Bune did well in the platoon events. Ten served on the ground. A glowing example of officers and sergeants looking after their own interests- out of two marquees, only 1/3 was for other ranks. We were turned out of the sergeants' mess into the kim after we had finished the 3-mile. Slight diversity when some of the boys came along in a Lady Godiva procession, Nobby Clarke being the Lady. Went out for a supper in the evening.

### *Sunday 28th*

Late morning again. Finished off the sports at 11 o'clock. Major Wray presented the prizes (chilo' for the canteen). 6 Platoon won the Platoon competition, 5 Platoon being a good third. 5 actually worked out a system by which we won by about 12 clear points. Bill Bune divided all the 5 Platoon prize money equally between all the platoon entrants. Every man in our room got a prize. In the afternoon, we cleared up the sports ground and went off to the CD Camp for a football match.

The C.O. beat us 3-1 after a very good game. We then went up to the camp for tea. After tea they gave us an exhibition of boxing, with some wrestling chucked in. There was also a comedy turn which should be on the music hall stage. Erine Brooks and Jock Muilley had a go. A grand piss up in their canteen afterwards. Our room on the whole well oiled, Joe Tarbuck, Erine Brooks, and Jock being the most helpless. There had been a piss up in our

canteen as well. Ruddick used beer as hair oil while Bert Gendry and Jock Hartery tried to set sail on the fjord in a beer crate!

#### *Monday*

The move to Akureyri is now definitely off. During the day made various journeys with truck. Chief event of day was a Corporal's Mess Meeting after tea. After 9 months here they have suddenly decided to make a Corporal's Mess! The only people who want one are Major Wray and two or three full corporals! All the evening we had a first class knatter about it in the room. The idea has certainly given us a lot of amusement.

Tuesday 30th June

Nothing in particular. Wrote to Jack Dononey.

#### *Wednesday 1st July*

Morning uneventful. All the afternoon up on Boot Hill firing rifles. Did not finish until after tea. Went out with Joe Mallen in the evening intending to go to an ENSA show, but by reports of the first house, decided not to go. In the cafe heard that a boat was coming up the fjord, and that the KOYLI's are supposed to be going up to Akureyri. Somehow I can't bring myself to believe that they are moving the KOYLI's after being here 2 years. Unless, of course, to England. Wrote to Bill Glaze.

#### *Thursday*

Day's maintenance on trucks. Weather turning a bit chillier. "Esja" came in in the afternoon in its customary manner. Heard a rumour that three men had to be collected for this company at 6 o'clock'. Had to go out just before tea- took the dockers down to the second jetty where there are a number of small boats waiting to act as lighters for the "Lochnagar" lying out in the fjord. The KOYLI's are definitely going and soon after lea the first of the Lincolns from Akureyri are seen in the village. The change- over is effected quickly and the "Lochnagar" is out early next morning. The three men materialize after tea and Gus Finch arrives in the room, so that yet another reason why we should go home is disproved. Went to pictures at the YMCA- "Roaring Twenties." Should be some mail in.

#### *Friday 3rd July*

Took Major Wray to Eskifjordur in the morning. Messed about getting a cover on the truck and got wet through. Besides the pay, collected buns for the canteen, and an assortment of things for the corporals' mess. Also bought a drawing book. Got back to find a letter from Dad and some books from home. Rained all day. On guard in the evening. Uneventful guard. A wicked piss up in the canteen, with some of the Lincons in there.

#### *Saturday*

Went down to the KOYLI Pioneer Shop and painted a cross for "Unknown German Airman, killed Krossanes, 22/5/41." Went for tea and cakes with Tubby Harris. Kip all the afternoon. Did not go out in the evening. Yanks and Lincolns in the canteen- knitter.

#### *Sunday*

Church Parade. Boots are no longer to be polished. After three years of war, the British Army have come to the conclusion that Dublin will do boots more good than Kiwi. Lazed about and went for tea and cakes in the afternoon with Roy. Scomes, and Topper. First time I have been out with Roy for a long time. The prices have gone up in the cafes. A 2 kionur supper is now 2.75. 1.25 Tea and cakes now cost 1.75. Did some painting in the evening. Along time since

I've done any as I could not get any drawing paper, but got some at last in Eski on Friday,. Make up for lost time by doing two. Put in for a 10 kionur extra big week (only 12 in credit) Also sent a cablegram to Dad for a couple of quid.

#### *Monday 6th July*

Did nothing until about 10 o' clock then detailed to go down to the KOYLI's officers mess to do some sign writing for Col. Walker. Went down there and spent the rest of the day doing on hours work. Rest of the time chatting to the Col's between drinking tea and playing a gramophone. Did some more painting in the evening. Sports meeting under Mr. Attrill.

#### *Tuesday 7th July*

Instead of the usual stables went for a run and some casual training up at the sports field. Did some maintenance during the morning. Went down the second jetty for Sergt's mess NAAFI stuff in the afternoon- Gimper Reeves 'came by' a husky puppy which the mess later named 'Chesty'. This dog reminds me of a couple of Greenland Husky Puppies, 9 months old, which one of the Lincoln Officers has brought with him. Already they are about the size of St. Bernards and have carried 50 lbs. Current affairs lecture by Attrill on India and more training in the evening. Wray drove to Likureyri this morning with Tom Newitt.

#### *Wednesday 8th July*

Duty driver and did the water with Charlie Ebers. In the evening the "Lochnagar" comes in and light drivers are on duty from 7:30 P.M. onwards. We did various journeys in connection with the Lincolns' unloading and finally got into bed round about 2 o'clock. Another boat came in during the evening, a Polish boat, possibly for salvage.

#### *Thursday*

Got up just in time for second breakfast and then went back to bed again for most of the morning. On a lecture by Barton at 11 o'clock. In the afternoon did little except go out for tea and cakes, and get pinched, with Tubby Harris, for taking coal from the dump. This developed under the guidance of Pte. Gedge, and results in the two of us having to put some extra wire up around the oval dump. Roy helped us out with it. Got some boots and a map of Iceland off the Colonel's batman. The "Esja" came in and out today. "Loch nagar" gone. Things have eased off considerably since Wray went. CHZ were all akip this afternoon and Barton came in and said nothing! Two boats came in in the evening, one a large boat, the biggest I've seen up this fjord.

#### *Friday*

Those two boats went out this morning. Possibly they were chased up here by a Jerry. Two North rops went out last night. Another boat came in later on in the morning. I was doing the sector sanitary fatigue. Football match in the afternoon against CHQ. Lost 1-0 after a poor game.

#### *Saturday 11th July and Sunday*

On sector sanitary fatigue again, thus missing a drill parade. At about 11 o' clock had to go up Minden Camp for a general alarm. Proceeded up to He CD Camp and then back again. Kipped in the afternoon. Warned for a coal fatigue, driving, from 12 midnight until 7 in the morning. There has been a lot of trouble with the Icelanders who are demanding an extortionate wage. The army decided therefore to do the thing themselves. A pity we didn't start when the boat came in on Wednesday. The RASC sent round the sector for men, Barton got 30 volunteers, and after some MOV at 11:30, we got cracking. Not pausing throughout the

night, the men filled 334 skips of coke. Each truck (8altogether) made approx. 20 journeys to the dump. This is about 3 times the work that the KOYLI did in the same time. Everybody very tired towards the end. Knocked off, had a shower at the RAMC, breakfast and then kip. Everyone who was on the job park out until well after tea. Missed dinner myself. Drifted out for a supper in the evening. Went to ENSA pictures on Sat. night- Deanna Durbin in "Spring Parade." Sam Briggs has been on an epic with Platoon Commanders and Serges across the fjord and over the mountain ridge to Budir, and back by boat. It was a 17 mile tramp and Sam says it's the worst trip he's had. Went out for a YMCA supper in the evening with the two Slobs. Have not been in the curvy cafe's since they put up the prices. Cafe' F2 seemed to be a different concern as they have not put their prices up.

#### *Monday*

On the usual sanitary job. In the afternoon went to Eskifjordur and bought myself a pair of shoes -25 kronur. The "Bug" came in in the evening with NAAFI supplies. Went down with George, Mick, Clifford, and did an hours strenuous P.T. with Cheeseman as instructor. On detail tonight, it is announced that John's and Peter's cafe's all out of bounds.

#### *Tuesday 14th July*

Usual job. Went in Peter's cafe on the on the strength of a swill delivery. He says he is going to see somebody about this price racket. On coaling in the evening. Finished about 10 o'clock. Everyone very pleased with the work in general. We had a late supper at which Wray congratulated us and dished out rum.

#### *Wednesday*

Nothing worth writing about

#### *Thursday*

On the usual job and went to Eski to get cakes for the YMCA.

#### *Friday 17th*

All the boys on a route march to Eskifjordur but the drivers were told to stay behind about five minutes before the start, we had to load kit on trucks and stand by. Had to do officers' mess fatigue and spent half an hour in the mess listening to the wireless. Kipped in the afternoon. All the blokes arrived back about 6 0' clock, most of them with blisters. 21 miles on roads for the first time for several months. We are used to marching over hills etc. Wrote to Mr. And Mrs Cobb. "Lochnayar" in. Letters from Grandma and Buck.

#### *Saturday*

Wrote to Auntie Elsie, requesting records. Now off the sector sanitary job. Cleaned up my truck. Platoon football match in the afternoon; bit of a flop.

#### *Sunday*

Put tents up in the morning, while CHQ were beaten by 4 Platoon in the final of the football. Cricket match in the afternoon, but did not attend.

#### *Monday*

On water truck with Erine Brooks all day. Went to pictures in the evening - "China Clipper." Lecture by Major Wray in the evening. Talked among other things, about future sports- mb sector other sector. Also of bivouacking out next weekend, and of a summer camp at Egilstadir in August.



*Tuesday 21st July*

Was knattered by Major Wray about the letter I wrote on Saturday in connection with security. I had been a bit rash and had to re-write the letter. 1 st XI beat H.Q. Lincone at football in the evening.

*Wednesday*

Did some scrimming on camouflage nets in the morning. 5 Platoon had a friendly game of football with CHQ in the afternoon. We lost 3-2. ENSA Concert in the evening. Not bad, though there was one horrible female in it.

*Thursday 23rd July*

Working for Norwegians all day. An alarm just before dinner- a German plane sighted down the fjord somewhere. Three planes went up after it. The usual shake back at camp. Had to get the truck loaded. News in the evening of our march to Egilstadir. Reserve drivers are to drive the trucks up there.

*Friday*

### **March to Egilstadir**

Started off at 9 o'clock, 5 Platoon leading, with Major Wray in the lead, setting a terrific pace. Afterwards transpired that we got to the top of the first ridge in \_ of an hour! Went straight up the valley, halting every hour regularly Ken Mortimer doing well. The two slob also well to the fore. Everybody rumbled the fact that if you get right in the front, there is a much steadier pace. The result was that when we started off after every halt, there was a terrific scramble, everyone jostling for first place. The valley seemed endless, but we finally reached a point where we could see the trucks going along the road. Here we had to cross a river, which we did by wading with boots only on our feet. The nicksacks are now beginning to feel a bit heavy. Incidentally they contain (or should contain!) two blankets, a groundsheet, gus cape, and safety margin, and of course rifle and bayonet. We had our lunch- drummed up tea and haversack rations- at 12:30. We reached the river at about 4 o'clock. All the company was together with a few exceptions- Roy had hurt his ankle and was just behind the company. Sam Briggs with Nick Carter under his wing had fallen behind but caught up again. Right at the back, Tom Barton and Jack Mailley were coming along with Crane, Peachey, Harris R, and Smith F. They arrived at the camp at 9 o'clock, after having come down the wrong side of the valley and had the big stream to cross. The main body got on the road and after what seemed an endless stretch, arrived at the woods where we were to bivouac. Though we were too tired to notice it, it was a beautiful spot, more like a glade in the New Forest than a part of Iceland. My partner was Roy and we got going with our tea and M. and V. With Tommy Cookers. Our attempts to light a wood fire m with no success.

We got into our improvised bivouac and soon got to kip, keeping very warm throughout the night. The total distance we had marched was about 18 miles. I had a blister and Roy had the cramp. Everything was spoilt by the commencement of a thin drizzle of rain in the evening which stopped later on but resumed activity early next morning. It is Wray's intention to march back either tomorrow, or weather pennitting the next day. The trucks brought up gun kit and ration for 48 hours.

*Saturday 25th July*

Woke up to the sound of the bugle and gradually got up. Breakfasted on bacon and fried bread. Raining all the time. Packed up most of our kit, but had to keep the bivouacs up. Wray finally decided to have dinners out and go back by truck in the afternoon. Reserve drivers

drove them there but the usual drivers took them back. Arrived back just after 4 o'clock and got ready for high tea. Went out for suppers with Mo Morris and had a knitter about aeroplanes. The general opinion of the affair is that it ranks with the original epic which followed more or less the same route. I, personally, thought it was worse as we had about 50 lbs to carry.

Plenty of beer in the canteen, resulting in Roy Tubby Harris, Tubby Martini, Jock Mailley, and Joe Mallen being well away. Mr. Wilmot, talking to Bert Hendry outside the guardian was amazed to see two seminude figures (Roy and Tubby Martin) emerge from our hut and meander down to the shithouse.

#### *Sunday*

Woke up, had breakfast, went back to bed, had dinner, and lazed about. There are several medium sized boats in with American medical Supplies. Tea and cakes in the afternoon

#### *Monday*

Spent the day on the truck. Messed about with the starter motor in the morning and washed sown in the afternoon. Supper and pictures in the evening, after lecture by Major Wray. Saw a 9 year old film "Casino de Paree" with Ruby Keeler and Al Jolson.

#### *Tuesday*

406 Inspection on the truck. In the afternoon went down for tea and cakes with Roy and Tich Feltham.- Latter one of reserve drivers, who take the trucks over one day per week. Football match in the evening- 1st XI v. 'C' Coy, lincolns. The best game I've seen here, resulting in a draw 0-0. Today Tubby Harris has been to Seydisfjordur with the E.S.O. Declares it to be a good place, but the road there terrible.

#### *Wednesday*

Detailed for target placing with Joe Mallen. Took my truck and was lucky to be sent back by Wilmot. Did odd jobs all day- collected sand with Eli, painted notice for Capt. Barton, football shield, made washbowl, cut rolls for the canteen, painted new locker (i.e. beer crate) and table. Wilson and Howells back from Akureyri after an interview for an O.C.T.U. Clifford has gone to Reykjavik. Jock MaiHey recovering from a scrap from Jack Hartery.

#### *Thursday 30th July*

Washed trucks over by the stream. Rained in the afternoon and spent the time in the billet. Wrote home.

#### *Friday 31st July*

Reserve drivers on the trucks today. On water with Joe Tarbuck. Beth Parade. Scrubbed mess hall with other drivers in the afternoon. Alarm sounded about 4 0' clock. Air raid yellow or something. Finished just before tea time. Pay parade, went out with Roy down Kionur Joe's.

#### *Saturday 1st August*

Free Day. Tried to wangle a ride to Seyrisfjordur with Robinson but fell through. Lazed about all day and walked around the village with Tubby HaITis. "Esja" in. Made a sketch of it and painted it in the evening. Curry Cinema- "Balalaika."

#### *Sunday*

Church parade a' la gimp in the morning. Recreational training in the afternoon- a bad game against the medical Corps- 5 Platoon as usual knattering and moaning. "Houtestroon" in.

### *Monday*

Scrubbed out in the morning. Kit inspection in the afternoon. Went down with George and Werland to second jetty.

### *Tuesday*

The big stunt, we are told, is now on, though nobody seems to know anything about it. On coke fatigue all day (driving). Bath in the evening. Turned out at 2 o'clock in the morning. Turn outs are quite frequent now. The siren goes, everybody rushes round in small circles, trucks start up, equipment is drug on, gun kit goes out, but no one knows anything!

### *Wednesday 5th August*

On coaling in the morning. Turned out again after dinner, and after tea. The time passes very quickly now with little to do. Turn-out lasted until 2 o'clock. We spent the time ambling about the camp or drumming up in the hut, or kipping. Jagged in and slept like a log until breakfast.

### *Thursday*

No parades till 10 o'clock and no work until after dinner when we went up to Egilotadur, for marking out the sports field for the sup- sector sports. Drivers went looking for wood! Spent the time climbing up the gorge of a mountain torrent nearby. Got back just in time, after Joe Mallen had been sent out to look for us. Mail in, but none for me as usual. My other wing is bashed slightly- Mr. Attrill this time.

### *Friday*

Sports field again. Reserve drivers on the trucks. Wicked moan. My most of the regular drivers. Drill parade but got off it by the simple expedient of not going on it. Left in the middle of the morning. All day marking out the track. Dinner out. Came back in Ernie Brooks' truck. What an experience. Went through a bridge without him seeing it! Missed an Icelandic wagon by about \_ ." (No exaggeration). Got a registered letter from Dad in the evening containing Z2..0..0 Went out with Joe Mullen to Y.M. for supper. Joe's future brother-in-law in the Y.M. cookhouse. We made connections.

### *Saturday 8th August*

Sub Sector Sports Day. No reveille'. Went up to the sports field with the competitors, then as far as Egilstadir with some chaps who had to go down there. Had coffee and cakes. Came back about dinnertime. Events lasted until about 7 o'clock. Kensingtons won with 31 points, 11 points ahead of 'C' Coy Lincolns- Tillinghurst won the 3 miles with a marvelous sprint at the end. All the team races went off well for Uswe had places in them all. The weather was uncertain. It rained last night, and rained just at the end of the sports. Back about 8:30. Kemp is in the nick again after a 'causing a disturbance' with Jock Mailley. Ruddle and Gedge on jankers! "Lochnayur in with Americans.

### *Sunday*

Odd jobs in morning. Kip in afternoon.

### *Monday*

Ordinary day's work Weather taken a change to rain and general mist and fog. A scheme starts in the evening, preparation for same in the afternoon. 5 Platoon are the enemy and are to be Commandos! They came by boat from the mouth of the fjord and make landings at

Eskifjordur whence they are to make their way towards Budereyri, their immediate object being the C.D. Camp. Joe Tarbuck and I take our trucks to Eski, where, for the purposes of the exercise, it is presumed that we have been landed from a boat. Went with a convoy of carriers and got to Eski in quick time. Had tea and cakes in a cafe and then went up past the lighthouse to wait for the platoon. We had on board a section's kit each. Whilst waiting we walked around and obtained a nice big haddock. Had a fit of coughing and was unpleasantly surprised to find myself coughing a good deal of blood. Got pretty dark and we had the signal to go back to the village. The platoon had now landed and we hung around the houses while they did a shoot. Then up on to Eski Ridge, and back to camp, arriving at about 5:30 a.m.

### *Tuesday*

Kip all the morning. Got up once to spit blood. Unloaded trucks in the afternoon. Spat more blood and Bill Bune told me to report sick, which I did, finding myself by tea time in between sheets in the hospital. Clothes drawn in and issued with blue suit. Joe Mallen came up to see me.

### *Wednesday*

Easy awakening- tea. No BRC! Spent time reading. Visits by Sam Briggs who wants to know about my kit which is being packed away, and by Joe Mallen who brings up a few things which I wanted. Avil Laverick is taking over my truck. What a life! Visitors again in the evening- Roy, George, Mick, Slob Martin, and Joe Mallen. Up to now, I have been feeling perfectly nonnal, and have not even spat up any blood. The wireless is going now and I have heard quite a bit of swing music. Wrote to Keith Milverton.

### *Thursday 13th August*

Uneventful day. Just lazing in bed doing nothing. No trouble physically., Roy brought a couple of books.

### *Friday*

As yesterday. Good job there's a vireless. Books here not very good. A Faroe Islander brought in at tea time, groaning. Some stomach trouble. Wilmot brought up my pay and Tom Barton my cigarette ration. Roy came up again. No mail this week. (The mail usually comes through on Tuesdays and Thursdays by the twice- weekly Akureyir bus).

### *Saturday*

Another lazy day. Sam, Joe Mallen and Roy came up in the evening. Sam is going to order some photos (by Major Wray) for me.

### *Sunday*

As yesterday, never have I seen such a healthy crew of "sick" men. [In this ward there is a Lincoln chap who has some sort of skin trouble and has been acting as a sort of billet orderly since I've been here; an R.F. with blood poisoning in his face, nothing serious- he's fed up with hospital; a sailor with dermatitis but otherwise as fit as a fiddle; two Americans, one with a cold and quite happy, the other with suspected appendicitis but no trouble now and just waiting to get out; myself with no pain whatsoever since I've been in here.]

### *Monday 17th August*

Wrote home. Coal ship in. 5 Platoon coaling tonight. "Esja" in.

*Tuesday 18th August*

Got up today. Wrote to Geoffrey Pearson. Have read 7 or 8 books since I've been in here. In the evening, George Wynn with books, also Roy and Tubby Martin.

*Wednesday*

Plenty to read – Hemingway and Book on Wireless. Only 4 of us left in the ward now. Yankee and the sailor gone.

*Thursday*

To be discharged tomorrow. 5 Platoon unloaded 89 tons of coal, thus breaching the record. Bloke with tonsillitis in a bad way. Have to keep quiet. Saw Roy and Tubby in the evening when they came up for a bath.

*Friday 21st August*

Came out of dock fit for duty but did nothing an day except get my kit in some sort of order. In the evening went out shopping (This week in hospital has now put me tonight with 130 kiomur in my pocket) bought 8 yards of material for dressmaking. Also some registered envelopes to send home and stockings which I bought some time ago.

*Saturday 22nd August*

On coaling all day. Did a bit of painting in the evening. 5 Platoon beat CHQ 4-2 at soccer. Some of the chaps have gone up to the training camp as an advance party. Company Dance in evening.

*Sunday 23rd August*

Coal boat now unloaded. *Zaanstroom* and *Lochnagar* in. Troops seen coming off it Reported sick-swelling in the groin. MO immediately diagnosed it as a slight rupture, the outcome being that I have to go to Akureyri for an operation. I thus miss the outing next week to the training camp. Boats out by dinnertime. Tubby Harris and Ken Mortimer back from Reykjavik where they have had a good time. H. Coy., by the way, are probably now in England. They left Akureyri last week.

*Monday*

Permanent 'Affend B' while waiting for my operation. The rest of the platoon went up the training camp today. Trucks well loaded. Attrill has one tent, the two sergeants another tent, while the rest sleep 8 or 9 to a tent! Before they went they packed all their kit in the large special kit bag. After break went for a ride with Harry Cardew, taking the holiday camp chaps up. Decided to stay for dinner. This is a real holiday camp breakfast is at 10 o'clock.

*Tuesday*

Long lie in the morning for Kemp and me, the sole member of our room now. Lucky not to be nicked for Wilmot, nicked Parratt and Standing for being in bed., Wilmot even nicked his own batman who at the time was making a cup of tea for him! Spent the day scrubbing kitbags and equipment, and putting kit away in various kitbags as laid down. Hard job to get all my personal kit packed. Eventually got the paintings and drawings in the lid of my gramophone. All the blokes came back in the evenings. The room immediately became a shamble with everybody moving. Went out with Tubby Harris and Joe Mallen.

*Wednesday*

Americans took over toolkit in the morning. In the afternoon went up to the Yankee Camp for mortar demonstration. Plenty of beer and chocolate in the canteen. Everybodys kitbags now packed.

*Thursday 27th August*

Room scrubbed out in the morning. Trucks cleaned up for the Yanks to take over. Wicked rought by Barton for using oil for cleaning. Kipped in the afternoon.

*Friday 28th August*

General Camp Duties. Pay Parade. Bright pair of shoes 45 kronur.

*Saturday*

General Camp Duties. Talk by Major Wray about coming move. Told us very little. Nowadays nobody does anything. The idea is to get everything in the camp cleaned up but as this was finished by Wednesday, we didn't do much. You see blokes drifting into the messhall at tea. And dinner-time and ever into the canteen at breaktime with a sleepy look about them. 4 Platoon. Beat 5 Platoon 3-1 in the afternoon.

*Sunday*

Free day. Got up in time for the canteen. Tea and cakes in the afternoon. Bumpstead in the process of being brought to look over fiddling the tickets of the company dance held last Saturday.

*Monday*

*Zaanstroom* in. Major Wray broke the succession of easy days with a drill parade and P.T. Bad weather imminent and starts to rain at night. Much speculation now as to when we shall move. Canteen selling out as NAAFI has closed down.

*Tuesday 1st September*

Rained all day and did nothing in particular. Icelander tells a RE that our boat is due in on Friday. Yanks building extra huts in the camp. Only a few trucks being used now. Wondering what will happen to me in England in view of my operation. Should be paid tomorrow.

*Wednesday*

General Camp Duties. While kitbags handed in.

*Thursday*

Paid 51- out of the company funds as Force Pay Master has not arrived. Still raining (since Monday). Lecture of Wray on 'phases' of the coming move.

*Friday*

Amp Duties. No BRC nowadays. *Nova* comes in dinnertime and immediately began to discharge American Rations. Several trucks working in shifts which continue all night. On in the afternoon but went to pictures in the evening *Dragon Murder Case*. Changed the room sweep into English P.O.

*Saturday*

The first pahse has started, i.e. loading of English kit onto the *Zaanstroom* which has been in for some time now down at the second jetty and which is to be used as a tender for the bigger

boat which should be in any day now to take us back to Merrie England. "The Monarch of Bermuda" leads the list of rumours as to identify of the big boat. Air Raid at Seydir.

#### *Sunday 5th September*

The boat, now identified by Marr, who has been to Seydisfjorur, as *The Duchess of Bedford* should be in this morning. Spent the day unloading American personal kit off a small boat the *Alonette*. The big boat came in during an air raid alarm with an escort of two destroyers at about 11 o'clock. Loading held up for a while owing to a high wind but the *Zaanstroom* finally pulled out round about teatime, and was seen against the *Duchess*. The American troops arrived 'en masse' at 7 and the transport handed over the trucks to the new drivers. The trucks are loaded with kit and are to be taken down to the jetty by our drivers and brought back by the Yanks. The company marched down about 9 o'clock while the trucks unloaded the kit at the second jetty. We finally got on to the *Bathholme*, the same lights that took us off the *Levister* when we arrived with no mishap except for Capt. Barton falling into the water. Got on board and after a meal in the mess room, which, unlike the *Bergarsfjord* and *Leinster*, is separate from our sleeping quarter, we got into the hammocks.

#### *Monday*

Woke up to find the boat on the move and the coast of Iceland receding into the distance. *The Duchess of Bedford* is a former Canadian Pacific Liner of approx. 21,000 tons, and is reported to be averaging about 20 knots. She is the ship which brought the last civilian refugees out of Singapore. There is more room in her than the the other boats we have been in and, being bigger, does not roll so much so that only a few of the company suffered any sea sickness. Tubby Martin, of course, disappeared at breakfast time, though this time we did not lose him altogether and he made in frequent appearances. We spend most of our time on this ship queeneing up for various reasons-meals (3 sittings; the boat accomodates 2000 men at least) canteen, washing, pay (301). Boat a box of Nestlé's Milk Chocolate (Yank) from the canteen and also 200 Lucky Strikes from a fellow who was getting rid of some.

#### *Tuesday*

Marvellous grub, plenty of fruit. Should dock tomorrow morning at Liverpool. Land, probably the Outer Hebrides, sighted in the evening.